

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: A BEAUTIFUL CLASS, AN IRRESISTIBLE  
DEMOCRACY: THE HISTORICAL  
FORMATION OF THE MIDDLE CLASS IN  
BOGOTÁ, 1955-1965

Abel Ricardo López-Pedrerros, Ph.D., 2008

Directed By: Professor Barbara Weinstein, Department of  
History

“A Beautiful Class an Irresistible Democracy” historicizes the (transnational) formation of the middle class in Bogotá, Colombia from the 1950s through the 1960s. Specifically, the dissertation asks certain historical actors—architects, dentists, social workers, agronomists, rural specialists and accountants—not only cultivated a sense of self-understanding as middle class but also campaigned for the materialization of a democratic project of hierarchical rule as middle class. Furthermore, it interrogates how this complex project was critically constructed within a context of U.S. imperial expansion, the advance of international development agencies and foundations, as well as the growth of the Colombia state during the consolidation of the political coalition known as the National Front.

The middle class in Latin America, as a historical formation, has rarely been at the center of scholars’ attention. The middle class, furthermore, has been taken as a self-evident reality, an inevitable consequence of modernization and a crystalline manifestation of democracy, with scholars (until recently) expecting it to manifest the

same experiences, values, practices and meanings in all times and geographical locations. It is as if the language practices of historians and social scientists with respect to the middle class preclude—rather than promote—further historical analysis. As a result, historical research on political and social relations in modern societies in twentieth century Latin America has largely been conceptualized in terms of polar opposites: workers and employers, capital and labor, subalterns and elites. By questioning these shared scholarly conventions, my dissertation rethinks how power relations have historically been understood by explaining the transforming complexities of the transnational formation of the middle class in Bogotá throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, in our present times when the middle class is again taken as universal standard to evaluate democracy throughout the world, my dissertation explains how the middle class—as an idea, practice of democratic rule and formation of political identification—has historically become dominant category to delineate our current definitions of democracy, globalization and neo-liberalism.

A BEAUTIFUL CLASS, AN IRRESISTIBLE DEMOCRACY

By

Abel Ricardo López

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Barbara Weinstein, Chair

Professor Mary Kay Vaughan

Associate Professor Daryle Williams

Associate Professor Brian Owensby

Associate Professor Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz

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**A Valentina, a sus sueños, a su generación.**

La lengua verdadera se nació junto con los dioses primeros, los que nacieron el mundo. De la primera palabra, del fuego primero, otras palabras verdaderas se fueron formando y de ellas se fueron desgranando, como el maíz en las manos del campesino, otras palabras. Tres fueron las palabras primeras, tres mil veces tres se nacieron otras tres, y de ellas otras y así se llenó el mundo de palabras. Una gran piedra fue caminada por todos los pasos de los dioses primeros, los que nacieron el mundo. Con tanta caminadera encima, la piedra bien lisita que se quedó, como un espejo. Contra ese espejo aventaron los dioses primeros las primeras tres palabras. El espejo no regresaba las mismas palabras que recibía, sino que devolvía otras tres veces tres palabras diferentes. Un rato pasaron así los dioses aventando las palabras al espejo para que salieran más, hasta que se aburrieron. Entonces tuvieron un gran pensamiento en su cabeza y se dieron en su caminadera sobre otra gran piedra y otro gran espejo se pulieron y lo pusieron frente al primer espejo y aventaron las primeras tres palabras al primer espejo y éste regresó tres veces tres palabras diferentes que se aventaron, con la pura fuerza que traían, contra el segundo espejo y éste regresó, al primer espejo, tres veces tres el número de palabras que recibió y así se fueron aventando más y más palabras diferentes que se aventaron, con la pura fuerza que traían contra el segundo espejo y éste regresó, al primer espejo, tres veces tres el número de palabras que recibió y así se fueron aventando más y más palabras diferentes los dos espejos. Así nació la lengua verdadera. De los espejos nació.

Las tres primeras de todas las palabras y de todas las lenguas son democracia, libertad, justicia. "Justicia" no es dar castigo, es reponerle a cada cual lo que merece y cada cual merece lo que el espejo le devuelve: él mismo. El que dio muerte, miseria, explotación, altivez, soberbia, tiene como merecimiento un buen tanto de pena y tristeza para su caminar. El que dio trabajo, vida, lucha, el que fue hermano, tiene como merecimiento una lucecita que le alumbra siempre el rostro, el pecho y el andar. "Libertad" no es que cada uno haga lo que quiere, es poder escoger cualquier camino que te guste para encontrar el espejo, para caminar la palabra verdadera. Pero cualquier camino que no te haga perder el espejo. Que no te lleve a traicionarte a tí mismo, a los tuyos, a los otros.

"Democracia" es que los pensamientos lleguen a un buen acuerdo. No que todos piensen igual, sino que todos los pensamientos o la mayoría de los pensamientos busquen y lleguen a un acuerdo común, que sea bueno para la mayoría sin eliminar a los que son los menos. Que la palabra de mando obedezca la palabra de la mayoría, que el bastón de mando tenga palabra colectiva y no una sola voluntad. Que el espejo refleje todo, caminantes y camino, y sea, así, motivo de pensamiento para dentro de uno mismo y para afuera del mundo.

De estas tres palabras vienen todas las palabras, a estas tres se encadenan las vidas y muertes de los hombres y mujeres verdaderos. Esa es la herencia que dieron los dioses primeros, los que nacieron el mundo, a los hombres y mujeres verdaderos. Más que herencia es una carga pesada, una carga que hay quienes abandonan en mitad del camino y la dejan botada nada más, como si cualquier cosa. Los que abandonan esta herencia rompen su espejo y caminan ciegos por siempre, sin saber nunca más lo que son, de dónde vienen y a dónde van. Pero hay quienes la llevan siempre la herencia de las tres palabras primeras, caminan siempre como encorvados por el peso de la espalda, como cuando el maíz, el café o la leña ponen la mirada en el suelo. Pequeños siempre por tanta carga viendo siempre para abajo por tanto peso, los hombres y mujeres verdaderos son grandes y miran para arriba. Con dignidad miran y caminan los hombres y mujeres verdaderos, dicen.

Pero, para que la lengua verdadera no se perdiera, los dioses primeros, los que nacieron el mundo, dijeron que había que cuidar las tres primeras palabras. Los espejos de la lengua podían romperse algún día y entonces las palabras que parieron se romperían igual que los espejos y quedaría el mundo sin palabras que hablar o callar. Así, antes de morirse para vivir, los dioses primeros entregaron esas tres primeras palabras a los hombres y mujeres de maíz para que las cuidaran. Desde entonces, los hombres y mujeres verdaderos custodian como herencia esas tres palabras. Para que no se olviden nunca, las caminan, las luchan, las viven...

Hay que seguir soñando. Hay que seguir caminando.

La historia de las palabras,  
Diciembre 1994.

## Acknowledgments

I have been thinking about the middle class for a while now. Little did I know that my undergraduate thesis could turn into a major project of historical research. Nor was I aware that such a project could indeed shed some lights on what our globalized society has become. Although very much still in the making, this project began several years ago when I came to the United States for graduate work. Class as a category of historical analysis was vanishing from classrooms and campuses—in the halls of the academia, class seemed to no longer matter. Yet, at the same time, I sensed around me talk about the middle class—in political campaigns, in social studies, in everyday conversation. If only, the argument went, Latin America could have developed a middle class like the U.S. perhaps I would have had neither the desire nor the need to do my graduate work at North American University.

To materialize this project has not been an easy. It has forced me to shake up my own beliefs—politically and otherwise. I have somehow had to turn away from my graduate education in order to pursue the research for and the writing of this dissertation. But I am quite aware that without that graduate education I would have been unable to begin this rethinking. It became impossible for me to repeat a familiar story about the middle class within the framework of identity politics. Now I am convinced that we should find both the courage and pleasure to be uncertain about our arguments we begin writing and to embrace being unaware of what we have yet to say about the problem at hand. How can one find courage and pleasure in writing if it is only to legitimize what is already known? At least in my case, the practice of writing compelled me to rethink the argument I wanted to put forward. And, no doubt, this rethinking carries with it analytic,

political, historiographical and ethical risks, which I fully assume, especially as I am uncertain whether I have succeed in such a difficult task.

This would have not been possible (at least the attempt) without the help of many people. Inevitably, I have accumulated more debts and gratitude than can properly be acknowledged in a few words. I would like to thank the protagonists of this story—middle class professionals who were always willing to talk with me about who they were, and wanted to be. The *Fernandos*—Agudelo, Cortés and Lópera—Clodomiro Rodruíguez, German Giraldo and Julio Emilio Echeverry graciously allowed me into their home and into their archives. Alicia Perdomo has also willingly discussed with me the meanings of being middle class since, as she said, it has been put in “el baúl de los recuerdos.” I will be for ever thankful to them all for our eternal disagreements. As will become apparent, we sharply disagree about the historical role of the middle class. I have tried to tell a story as I see it. Perhaps, I will disappoint them. It is my hope, however, that by questioning ourselves at least we increase our awareness about what we have become.

Alberto Valencia was a very engaging man and did want to see “something in writing” in order to (finally) discuss it. I am deeply sad that this will not happen. But I am happy to report that our heated discussions will continue to provoke me.

Research for this dissertation has been generously supported by grants and fellowships from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies as well as from the section on Research on Interdisciplinary Approaches and Original Resources of the Library of Congress. The Department of History at the University of Maryland provided a year of writing and financial support for a summer of research.

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At Maryland, I have had the good fortune to make friends. Doing graduate school is not easy but these friends have made the experience a little bit less difficult. I offer heartfelt thanks to these friends who in several ways have supported my work: Leandro Benmergui, Thomas Castillo, Jeff Coster, Shane Dillingham, Susanne Eineigel, Reid Gustafson, Paula Halperin, Thanai Jackson, Mark Kehren, Linda Noel, Shari Orisich, and Sarah Sarzynski.

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Closer to my immediate community, I want to let some friends know how grateful I am for their help and support. Los venezolanos—Lufan, Orlando, Makerly, Maria Fernanda, Tomas, John, Javier, Maribel, and Ginet—have provided me with a powerful friendship. We have helped one another in countless ways. With no pressure, they usually asked the unaskable question: When are you finishing the dissertation? They will be disappointed to hear that the writing never ends as I now embark on the completion of a book. But I hope that even with this disappointment we can continue being good friends, as well as having dancing and drinking parties.

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## Introduction

To be a traitor to one's regime, a traitor to one's sex, to one's class—what other reasons are there to write? And to be a traitor to writing itself.

Gilles Deleuze

The genuine historian must have the strength to recast the well known into something never heard before.

F. Nietzsche

In 1954, Alberto Valencia, an architect working for the Inter-American Housing and Planning Center (CINVA) in Bogotá, an office inaugurated by the Organization of American States and the U.S. Office for International Technical Assistance in 1952, made a short trip to a small town called Anolaima, two hours away from the capital city. He was seeking, he wrote in a letter to his mother in 1955, to find himself in a “remote but attractive place.” He was excited, it seems, because “*a middle class guy* like [him]” could use this trip to find “the reality of social life.” After some days in the field, the architect was determined to leave “[his] books and city behind...” in order to come back and teach “how to build houses, how to live in community... how to live in democracy.” His desire was to “know the Colombian peasants *in person* ...their families...their lives...their souls, their activities.” Back in his office at CINVA in Bogotá, according to the minutes of training discussions in July 1955, Alberto complained that it was “the cultured [*ilustradas*] Colombian elites [who] could afford to continue ignoring” the peasants (*campesinos*) and the working class (*obreros* or *trabajadores*). Instead, he, as a middle class guy, called upon his fellow professionals to be “committed to work for a democratic society...to be fully involved with those who [were] oppressed.” After expressing how much he had enjoyed going to “these unknown lands,” Alberto

Valencia concluded—or realized—who he really was: a privileged man who had been born “in a beautiful class...a class that make democracy irresistible.”<sup>1</sup> Alberto’s concerns, preoccupations and, above all, realizations raise critical questions about the historical formation of the middle class in Bogotá, Colombia, during the late 1950s and 1960s. What were the historical circumstances and discursive conditions that enabled Alberto to *classify* himself as a “middle-class guy”? During those very political years in the Americas, what did it mean to be middle class? Why did the peasants, as well as the working class and the “cultured elites,” play such an important role in Alberto’s self-understanding as a middle-class guy? In this crucial moment of Colombia’s Cold War history when traditional Liberal and Conservative parties entered into a political coalition for national reconciliation, peace and democracy in the late 1950s, why did he find it so important to be committed to living in a democratic society? What was his role to play in creating that democratic society? And, perhaps more importantly, why did he think that his role as a middle-class professional would make democracy irresistible? By closely working through these questions, using previously unexplored historical sources and weaving a theoretical perspective that combines attention to the formative power of politics, structure, discourses and subjectivities, this dissertation argues that the formation of the middle class was not an inevitable consequence of industrialization, urbanization and occupational diversification. Rather, I contend, it was a contested democratic project of class-based hierarchical rule and a paradoxical product of

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<sup>1</sup>All the citations come from Apuntes de clase, asignaturas, discusión y entrenamiento, Folder : material de trabajo de campo, December, 1954 and July, 1955, Inter-American Center for Housing and Planning Archive; Personal letter from Alberto Valencia to his mother, February 1955, Alberto Personal Archive.

imperial/transnational encounters between Colombia and the United States during the 1950s and 1960s.

Looking at Bogotá as my case study, I argue that the transnational/imperial formation of the middle class profoundly altered the shape democracy would take during the Cold War in the Americas. Specifically, I ask how certain historical actors—architects, dentists, social workers, agronomists, rural specialists and accountants—not only cultivated a sense of self-understanding as middle class but also campaigned for the materialization of a democratic project of hierarchical rule as middle class. Furthermore, I interrogate how this complex project was critically constructed within a context of U.S. imperial expansion, the advance of international development agencies and foundations, as well as the growth of the Colombia state during the consolidation of the political coalition known as the National Front. In so doing, I demonstrate how middle-class professionals, while working for democracy, attempted to sediment a hierarchical society in which they could not only be distinguished from other social groups, as most of the recent studies on the middle class would have it, but also, and more importantly, be hierarchically located above elites as well as the working class and the peasantry—and govern them democratically.



## The Middle Class and the Predicament of Democracy

Historians and social scientists alike have long understood the middle class as originating first in Europe and the United States, then radiating to—and influencing—the rest of the globe. This universalized story has routinely perpetuated a teleological narrative of an exclusively Western democracy—usually associated with North Atlantic societies—through which other regions of the world are quickly compared to the so-called universal models and always found wanting. Indeed, the universalization of these experiences has perpetuated the notion that divergent historical experiences can only be understood as deviations, as failures or, at best, as derivative.<sup>2</sup> Recent studies of the middle class in Latin American and other Global South geographical locations have sought to dispute these arguments by historicizing what it is still considered the *local* experiences of the middle class.<sup>3</sup> Although this dissertation is very much part of this cohort of historical studies, I contend that this

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<sup>2</sup> See, among others, Jürgen Kocka “The Middle Class in Europe,” *The Journal of Modern History* 67 (December 1995): 783-810. For a critical perspective on eurocentrism, see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe : Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). For a very provocative critique of Chakrabarty’s argument, see Carlota Dietze, “Toward a History on Equal Terms: A Discussion of Provincializing Europe,” *History and Theory* 47 (February 2008), 69-84. Even recent studies in Latin American history that seek to challenge the universalizing tendencies of postcolonial theory, the Latin American middle classes appear as “hybrid”—that is, presumably, modern and traditional—in comparison to North Atlantic societies, where the middle class is seen as fully modern. See Mark Thurner and Andres Guerrero, eds., *After Spanish Rule: Postcolonial Predicaments of the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). Finally, recent theoretical explorations of the relationship between what is conceived as the local (i.e., Latin America) and the global (i.e., North Atlantic societies) have privileged an ahistorical homogenization of class differentiation, erasing any role for the middle class. Implicitly, these studies subsume what is conceived as the local into a kind of “subaltern authenticity” that misses so much of how a middle-class formation was crucial in the making of national postcolonial states. See, specifically, Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); see also Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> For a truly historiographical/comparative analysis of the middle class, see Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 172-187.

recent research on the middle class has left unquestioned the putative universal relationship between democracy and the formation of the middle class precisely because the analysis has been limited to how Latin American middle-class experiences were different from—or similar to—those in other parts of the world.<sup>4</sup>

These studies have worked under a shared assumption that poses a sharp distinction between an ideal middle-class modernity/democracy and what is understood as the reality of being middle class. Thus, they generally offer a dialectical critique through which the reality of middle-class practices bring into question what is conceived to be the universal ideal, indeed the abstraction, of the middle class, an ideal that is usually located outside of Latin America. Brian Owensby, for instance, argues that the “we cannot think about the middle class except by considering its relationship to the idea of the middle class *originating* outside Latin America. Latin Americans helped imposed the category upon themselves.”<sup>5</sup> The ironies, incongruities, dissonances and contradictions are put at the very center of the historical formation of the middle class precisely because those

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<sup>4</sup> My critical view of these works is only possible because I have had the privilege to write *after* these authors who, with pathbreaking historical analyses, have strongly influenced my arguments about the middle class in Colombia.

<sup>5</sup> See Brian Owensby, *Intimate Ironies: Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class Lives in Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 256, 8, my emphasis; D. S. Parker, *The Idea of the Middle Class; White-Collar Workers and Peruvian Society* (College Station: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); José Pablo Silva, “White-Collar Revolutionaries: Middle Class Unions and the Rise of the Chilean Left, 1918-1938 (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2000); Michael Ervin, “The Arts of the Possible: Agronomists, Agrarian Reform and Middle Politics of the Mexican revolution” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2004); Michael Ervin, “The 1930s Agrarian Census in Mexico: Agronomists, Middle Politics and the Negotiation of Data Collection, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 87:3 (August 2007), 537-570; Patrick Barr-Melej, *Reforming Chile: Culture, Politics, Nationalism and the Rise of the Middle Class* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Maureen O’Dougherty, *Consumption Intensified: the Politics of Middle-Class Daily Life in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Dennis Gilbert, *Mexico’s Middle Class in the Neo-Liberal Era* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2007).

historical actors who defined themselves as middle class were constantly struggling—“and could never quite live up to”—or fully experience the ideal of being middle class. Then, presumably, either for North Atlantic societies or geographical spaces in the Global South, the ideal of the middle class is criticized only by its incompleteness in practice and everyday experience.<sup>6</sup>

The interpretation offered in this dissertation goes against these historical arguments. The dissent is certainly partial; I do not want to dismiss these very important works that, in various moments throughout my historical analysis, I rely on. The problem is that these approaches leave the very ideal association of modernity/democracy and middle class unquestioned, precisely because modernity,

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<sup>6</sup> Owensby, 8. Similar arguments have been made for other geographical locations outside the North Atlantic societies. Sanjay Joshi, for instance, argues that the “point is not to claim that middle classes across the world were identical, but to point to the similarities in the nature of middle-class modernities constructed in different parts of the world; to point to the extent to which all such politics deviated from the ideal type usually attributed to a hyper real Europe.” In other words, even in Europe the middle class was not able to live up to the ideal of modernity. I would argue that these arguments somehow reproduce an ideal universality that is seen as nonhierarchical and universally inclusive—only if the middle class would have been able to live up to those ideals, could the middle class have been completely modern—then modernity, however defined, is unquestioned. See Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: The Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India* (Oxford University Press, 2003) 181. O’Dougherty, for instance, argues that the main historical conclusions about the middle class have been based upon North Atlantic societies. What happens, she asks, with these conclusions when we study a location outside the “first world” where “among other differences, the middle class is a minority rather than a sizable demographic group? This questions summarizes, I would argue, how the tendency to particularize the history of the middle class has, by extension, reproduced the universalization of the North Atlantic experience—What are the criteria, historically speaking to categorize the middle class in Latin America as a “minority? Certainly, the experiences of the “first world.” In a recent review of some books about the middle-class in Latin America, a historian concludes that “the ‘nonexistent’ Latin American middle class seems to be going through another phase of rediscovery...and recently historians have discovered how the middle class is also important in the third world.” Review of O’Maureen Dougherty’s *Consumption Intensified* by Andrew Kirkendall in *Politics and Society* (Summer 2003) 45:2, 145. See also Keith David Watenpugh, who argues that the formation of the middle class in the Arab Middle East during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century could not complete the project of modernity precisely because the means by which modernity spread in Eastern Mediterranean society did not always—by comparison to “metropolitan areas”—lead to the creation of secular, democratic and rational institutions. Rather, he argues, its local variations cemented distance, alienation and cultural impoverishment. In so doing, Watenpugh reproduces the very universalization of the middle class precisely because what is conceived as the local is always read as failure or deviation. See Keith David Watenpugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 303-308.

however defined, is criticized by pointing to its supposed incongruities and dissonances in practice. If the ideal could have been fully—that is, universally—experienced, then no dissonance, no particular hierarchies and no contradictions could have ever existed. This argumentation serves to protect the reliability of a supposedly ideal form of democracy/modernity that is immune to class hierarchies, contradictions and gender distinctions, thus obscuring their intimate constitutive nature.

In contrast, by looking specifically at the crucial juncture of Colombia's Cold War history when the National Front sought to end La Violencia by implementing systematic social and economic reforms, I seek to historicize how the very relationship between democracy and middle class—what is putatively seen as an ideal—came to play a paramount role in shaping new forms, rationalities and methodologies of U.S. imperial/transnational rule. The local projects of middle-class rule, I argue, have historically had a bearing on a larger imperial terrain, and I contend that these projects cannot fruitfully be examined as mere local/practical detail in contrast with a purported ideal located outside Latin America—although, as will become clear, such detail must surely form the basis of any significant historical account. The formation of a democratic middle class during the late 1950s and early 1960s, I conclude, was neither the result of purely local/practical circumstances that were incongruent with ideal models, nor a simple imposition of what can be (mis)construed as an ideal or universal model from outside Latin America, but rather an integrated yet hierarchical formation unfolding within an imperial/transnational terrain.

Similarly, I question recent historical analyses that repeatedly underscore the post-World War II historical process through which the United States tried to push societies toward a liberal, democratic and capitalist modernity by promoting the creation of a stable, prosperous middle class inoculated against communism in the Americas. These historical narratives, I contend, have operated under a shared assumption about an ideal domestic “American way of life”—explicitly or implicitly embodied in the so-called middle-class nation—that was transparently ready to be exported to the rest of the Western Hemisphere.<sup>7</sup> If the whole process failed, some argue, it was because, due to certain political and social conditions, Latin America was not ready for a middle-class democracy. Others argue that, despite the noble intentions of some U.S. policymakers to forge a middle class, U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War ended up weakening the democratic processes in the region as it “fortified illiberal forces, militarized societies” and limited the social definitions of democracy.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> As Paul Kramer has recently argued, this historiography of “export or projection” assumes that the U.S. simply injected what they considered domestic formations into foreign terrains. Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Stephen C. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1999); Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David C. Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefele, and Michael E. Latham, eds., *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development and the Global Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2003); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don’t Go Home! Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> See Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre. Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2004), xiv. I do not wish to argue that the United States did not play this role; however, my concern here is the historical relation between democracy and the formation of a middle class in the consolidation of U.S. empire. Recent studies on empire have been useful in this regard. See, among others, Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History*

Perhaps as a result of these narratives, historians and social scientists alike, since the 1950s, have organized their inquiries by asking whether the middle class could potentially become a democratic force. In 1958, for example, John J. Johnson described how the middle-class sectors could potentially play a democratic role by promoting economic nationalism, state-sponsored development, and the expansion of public education and the professionalization of politics. He envisioned a middle class as the vanguard of progress in Latin American and as a democratic force capable of balancing the extremes of Right and Left.<sup>9</sup> And yet, soon after the publication of his book Johnson came under attack precisely because, several authors argued, the middle class in Latin American did not represent a dynamic, modernizing group that could, in practice, forge democracy. During the late 1960s and 1970s, the *dependentistas* argued that the middle class did not play a democratic role precisely because it supported military dictatorships throughout Latin America.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore,

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*of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan and Peter C. Perdue, eds., *Imperial Formations* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2006); See also Seth Fein, "New Empire into Old: Making Mexican Newsreels the Cold War Way," *Diplomatic History*, 28, 5 (November 2004): 703-747.

<sup>9</sup> John J. Johnson, *Political Change in Latin America: The Emergence of the Middle Sectors* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958); See also Luis López de Mesa, *Tres estudios sobre la clase media en Colombia* (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1952); Theo R. Crevenna, *Materiales para el estudio de la clase media en América Latina* (Washington: Pan-American Union, 1951); Victor Alba "The Middle-Class Revolution," *New Politics* (Winter, 1962): 63-73; Robert Alexander, *Communism in Latin America* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1961); Gabriel Salazar, "Para una historia de la clase media en Chile," Documento de trabajo no 60 (Santiago: Sur Profesionales Ltda, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); See also Magdalena León de Leal, "La clase media y la dependencia externa en Colombia: esquema para su estudio," *Razón y Fabula* 23 (Jan/Feb, 1971): 58-73; José Nun, "A Latin American Phenomenon: The Middle-Class Military Coup," in James Petras and Maurice Zeitlin, eds., *Latin America: Reform or Revolution? A Reader* (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1968); Tulio Halperín Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Nicolás Buenaventura, *La proletarianización de los profesionales y los sectores*

these authors argued, in order for the middle class to be truly democratic, it would need to disappear by a gradual process of proletarianization into the subjugated masses. At the same time, the *dependentistas* argued that if the middle class underwent a process of incorporation into the elites, this would be the clearest manifestation of its anti-democratic role and practices. More recently, several authors have documented how the middle class in Latin America was democratic *and* anti-democratic at the same time, depending on historical periodization. It was democratic, the argument goes, because it joined forces with the laboring classes to make concrete material and political demands. Yet it was anti-democratic precisely because it sought to distance itself from manual labor and saw in the elites an unavoidable reference point in its historical self-definition.<sup>11</sup> For over a half century, therefore, in both academic and foreign-policy studies, the strength of the middle class has always been regarded as the barometer of modern democracies.<sup>12</sup>

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*medios* (Bogotá: Ediciones Suramericana, CEIS, 1985); Rocio Londoño, *Sindicalismo y política económica* (Bogotá: FEDESARROLLO-CEREC, 1986). See also César Germaná, "The Middle Strata and the Problem of the Class Alliances," translated by Peggy Westwell, *Latin American Perspectives* 10, No. 2-3 (1983): 171-184 ; Carlos Figueroa, *Estratificación y movilidad ocupacional en América Latina* (Santiago de Chile: Cuadernos de la CEPAL, No. 39, 1981), 6-64; Antonio García, "Las clases medias en América Latina: Hacia una teoría de la ambigüedad social," *Cuadernos Americanos* 60 (September-December 1968).

<sup>11</sup> Parker, *The Idea of the Middle Class*, 240. Other recent studies on the middle class have deemed it wiser to overlook entirely the very historical relation between the middle class and democracy. Owensby, for instance, argues that the interpretation offered in his work on Brazilian middle classes is directed toward a "mid-range conceptualization." The main approach, he writes, is the question of class "from the perspective of the people who lived it. Thus, I am not concerned except incidentally with the more broadly interpretive, historical sociological questions of whether the middle class was or was not an agent of capitalist development and democratic government." As will become evident, I argue that this historical relationship cannot be overlooked when talking about the middle class precisely because the very formation of the middle class as a class was so inseparable from discussions of democracy and appropriate government.

<sup>12</sup> For a historiographical essay on the middle class in Latin America, see Michael Jimenez, "The Elision of the Middle Class and Beyond: History, Politics and Development Studies in Latin America's 'Short Twentieth Century,'" in *Colonial Legacies: The Problem of Persistence in Latin America History* (London: Routledge, 1999), 207-228. For a similar argument about the middle class

Although this dissertation has been profoundly influenced by these recent works, I seek to historicize the very association between middle class and the practices of democracy. Rather than turning to a transhistorical ideal of democracy to read the experiences of the middle class or proclaiming whether the middle class was or was not democratic, I interrogate the practices, conceptions, rationalities, forms, and meanings of democracy by looking at the historical/transnational formation of the middle class in Bogotá during the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>13</sup> This approach brings into question the shared analytical framework that posits class hierarchies and democratic rule as opposed to and irreconcilable to each other. Study after study (and certainly this is not limited to historical works on the middle class) takes for granted

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in other parts of the world, see Oliver Zunz, Leonard Schoppa and Nobuhiro Hiwatari, eds., *Social Contracts under Stress: The Middle Classes of America, Europe, and Japan at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002); Burton J. Bledstein and Robert D. Johnston, ed., *The Middling Sorts: Exploration in the History of the American Middle Class* (New York: Routledge, 2001). As it should be evident in the last three footnotes, there has been a vast historiographical production about the middle class. Although it is impossible to elaborate in this dissertation, it is crucial to mention that we need to go beyond the “elision hypothesis.” Recent works have legitimized their historical inquiries by arguing that, in contrast to North Atlantic societies, Latin American middle class has been elided from historian’s agenda. I would argue that this has not been the case—we have indeed talked about the middle class. The task, I would contend, is to read this vast historiographical production, along with travel accounts, statistical handbooks, novels, sociological and political studies, magazines and films, as a part of a larger transnational/imperial dialogue that critically contributed to the global hegemony—or what I call the transnational totemization—of the ideal of the middle class as the vital foundations of modern democracies. This is important not only because these discussions were translated into policies but also because these ideas were manipulated and reworked by some historical actors in the very process of becoming middle class.

<sup>13</sup> This dissertation also seeks to contribute to a small but growing body of scholarship that intends to expand the study of democratization to include realms beyond the formal political arena. As David Nugent has recently argued, “most studies of democracy restrict their field of vision to *procedural* democracy—to the institutions and activities surrounding competitive elections, the secret ballot, universal suffrage, the rights of citizenship, the accountability of public officials to the electorate, the rule of law and the subordination of the military to civilian authority ... few have devoted attention to wholly different *conceptions or forms of democracy*.” See David Nugent, “Alternative Democracies: The Evolution of the Public Sphere in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Peru,” *PoLAR* 25, No. 1, 20002, 152. See also his forthcoming book *Alternative Democracies: Discipline, Dissent and State Formation in Northern Peru*; James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)



the meanings and practices of democracy and, by explicit implication, argues that any historical instances of class hierarchy and gender distinction are evidence of the failure to achieve a purified ideal of democracy, or of its distortion in local practice. Therefore, *better, more or real* democracy is then treated as the purification of the gendered and classed hierarchical rule itself. In the process, each side stands opposed to the other in a closed economy whereby more class hierarchies and gender distinctions imply less democracy, and more democracy implies fewer hierarchies. Instead, I invite us to rethink the meanings, workings, political rationalities and technologies of hierarchical rule continually at work in the histories of democracy, rather than assuming their transhistorically good or bad qualities.<sup>14</sup>

### **Mapping the Dissertation**

This dissertation looks specifically at the crucial juncture of the late 1950s and 1960s in Colombia, when the consolidation of the National Front—a bipartisan coalition—sought to usher in a new era of political reconciliation, democracy and peace by systematically implementing a series of social, political and economic programs. Rather than ask whether these policies and programs succeeded in resolving the political conflicts known as La Violencia, the question posed by a number of Colombian historians, I instead explore how middle-class professionals

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<sup>14</sup> This argument has been influenced by recent studies on the anthropology of democracy. See Julia Paley, “Toward an Anthropology of Democracy,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 2002 31: 469-496; See also Julia Paley, ed., *Anthropology of Democracy* (Santa Fe: School of Advanced Research Press, forthcoming); see also, Daniel Walkowitz, *Working With Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle-Class Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Lucia Michelutti, “The Vernacularization of Democracy: Political Participation and Popular Politics in North India,” *Journal of the Anthropological Royal Institute*, 13:3 (2007), 639-656; Kimberly Coles, *Democratic Designs: International Intervention and Electoral Practices in Postwar Bosnia Herzegovina* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007); Dipesh Chakrabarty “‘In the Name of Politics’: Democracy and the Power of the Multitude in India,” *Public Culture* 19:1 (2007), 35-57.

became embedded in a new form of democratic rule in the context of U.S. imperial expansion.<sup>15</sup> Chapter 1 seeks to engage with, extend, and tentatively question recent historical interpretations of U.S. Empire. At some risk of simplification, one can say that these recent works have revised historical accounts of U.S. imperialism as a totalizing, unified force based on one-sided imposition and domination. This scholarship has rightly called our attention to how “subaltern agency,” contestation, negotiation, and encounters were at the very center of how imperial rule has operated historically. These historical analyses have, furthermore, explained the range of networks, exchanges, borrowings, behaviors, discourses whereby the external become internalized in Latin America, as well as how the United States has been influenced by Latin America. And yet, I would argue, we are reaching a point where criticism is giving way to method. In our zeal to provide only accounts of authentic experiences happening “on the ground,” we forget too quickly, it seems to me, the very historical constitution of vertically exercised imperial power. I argue that it is through this hierarchy that an imperial state reaches down to influence or negotiate with those historical actors who are rooted on the ground.<sup>16</sup> While profoundly

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<sup>15</sup> This dissertation also invites Colombian historians to move away at least a little bit from their focus on La Violencia. The task is neither to ignore nor to fail to account for the variety of state and elite violence as a form of rule in the 1950s and 1960s. Rather, it is to stress the possibility of seeing how that form of domination was accompanied by the emergence of new modalities of rule that usually worked under the name of peace and democracy. See Medófilo Medina and Efraín Sánchez, *Tiempos de Paz: Acuerdos en Colombia, 1902-1994* (Bogotá: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2003). See also Cesar Augusto Ayala, *La historia política hoy: sus métodos y las ciencias sociales* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> See Joseph et al., *Close Encounters of Empire*, 13-15. See also Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream: Nicaragua Under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Harvey R Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States Occupation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). I have found Julian Go's analysis very inspirational for understanding the role of the middle-class professional in the consolidation of U.S. rule during the late 1950s and 1960s. By comparing U.S.

influenced by these historiographical changes and pathbreaking historical analyses (indeed, my arguments are heavily indebted to these historical explanations of U.S. imperialism), Chapter 1 is guided by a conviction that it is also crucial to explain, historically, the different hierarchical imperial organizations through which those places of contestation and struggle were put into place. Rather than simply assuming asymmetry within those encounters, we need to explain how these hierarchies came into being as crucial elements of new practices of U.S. imperial rule. I do not wish to dismiss out of hand the very important recent literature *nor* to return to a privileging of the U.S. imperial autobiography. Rather, what I want to offer is a critical interrogation of the circumstances through which what has been called a “close encounter of empire” became historically possible in the first place: that is, to ask for the historical conditions through which different historical actors were able to play a gendered and classed role in that imperial encounter.<sup>17</sup> With this concern in mind, in the first chapter I seek to elucidate how these middle-class professionals became intimately embedded in new practices of U.S. imperial/transnational rule during the

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control of the Philippines and Puerto Rico at the turn of the twentieth century, he argues that U.S. officials aimed political lessons of self-government and democracy at the elites in both places. In contrast to that historical moment, I argue that during the 1950s and 1960s U.S. policymakers, along with several transnational institutions, also aimed at educating the middle-class professional in order to create a democratic government. Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico during US Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). I have also found Sandhya Shukla and Heidi Tinsman’s argument quite compelling to understand the transnational formation of the middle class. I remain unclear, however, what is the difference between using an “imperial framework” and a “transnational” one. See their edited volume *Imagining Our Americas: Toward a Transnational Frame* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> See James Ferguson, “Decomposing Modernity: History and Hierarchy after Development,” in Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton and Jed Esty, *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); See also David Scott, “The Social Construction of Postcolonial Studies,” in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*; and his *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005)

1950s and early 1960s. Furthermore, I consider how a wide range of forces—U.S. foreign policymakers and advisors, Colombian state officials and intellectuals, private capital organizations, and some elite sectors, as well as “experts” associated with transnational institutions—positioned middle-class professionals as the *best democratic governors*: as those who would be able to train both the laboring classes and the oligarchs in how to live in peace and democracy, and in doing so, overcome the “confrontational style of politics” that had produced La Violencia in Colombia beginning in the late 1940s.

The second and third chapters move the analysis into a discussion of how these hierarchical constitutions of the middle class were collectively experienced—and constantly put into question—through an astonishing variety of political discourses, practices, and actions that were reworked in order to forge a (new) democratic project. Recent historical studies of Colombia and other countries in Latin America have recognized middle-class professionals as actors who have played important roles in state expansion. In these recent works, which study political and social relations from the antagonistic extremes, middle-class historical actors appear only fleetingly as translators, mediators and emissaries.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, these historical accounts tell us how middle-class professionals could, at times, ally with

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<sup>18</sup> Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Susan Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Reworking of the Working Class, 1920-1964* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Javier Zaenz, *Mirar la Infancia*; Mary Kay Vaughan, *Culture Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Thomas Klubock, *Contested Communities*; Karin Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Katherine Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico* (State College: Pennsylvania State University, 2001); Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

the working classes to negotiate with the state, and at other times reproduced state discourses in negotiating with the lower class. A historical picture emerges of a middle-class professional with predetermined political interests and in which the middle-class actors continue to be conceptualized as having no political horizon of their own. In stark contrast, the second chapter of this dissertation endeavors to problematize how these professionals reworked their hierarchical positions as best governors by attempting to materialize a *professional democracy*. In so doing, I argue, these professional men and women attempted to prepare both the elites and the laboring classes, as Alberto Valencia suggested in the opening lines of this introduction, to live in democracy and peace. More specifically, the chapter shows how in the materialization of this professional democracy, these men and women, in their effort to see themselves as middle class, tried to sediment a hierarchical society in which they could not only position themselves at the center of the society and distinct from other social groups, as most recent studies on the middle class would have it, but also and more importantly, to be oppositionally located above the laboring classes, the peasantry *and* the elites in order to govern them.

Despite a recent surge of interest in studying the middle class, power relations during the 20<sup>th</sup> century are still largely understood in terms of binary opposites: rich and poor, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, those above and those below. And although recent literature has incorporated both the heterogeneity of “subject positions” and more nuanced perspectives that integrate elites and subalterns, such analyses continue to emphasize an underlying narrative that excludes the middle. Chapter 3 seeks to offer a historical argument not only for

putting the middle class back onto the scholarly agenda, but also and more importantly, for understanding power relationships and methodologies of democratic rule *from* the middle.

The final chapter questions the persistent historical assumption that the middle class has had little, if any, political associative life by historicizing a broad repertoire of political actions, demands and practices. By merely asking whether middle-class actors supported larger political movements, we have limited ourselves to evaluating how some putatively middle-class interests can be found in larger political movements. As a result, most studies have concluded that the middle class was politically inconsequential precisely because it was not able to galvanize a broad and lasting middle-class political party or movement.<sup>19</sup> With no political collective action of their own, these middle-class actors supposedly became politically available for cooptation and manipulation by diverse political movement and politicians that did not necessarily speak on their behalf.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, we have the tendency to assign class membership to certain groups seen as middle class and then from there conclude that whatever they say, write and do can be taken as evidence of middle-class participation.<sup>21</sup> In doing so, I would argue, we have considered the

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<sup>19</sup> Brian Owensby, *Intimate Ironies*, 240.

<sup>20</sup> Mauricio Archila, *Idas y venidas. Vueltas y revueltas: Protestas sociales en Colombia, 1958-1990*. (Bogotá: CINEP, 2004), 346-347. Daniel Pécaut, *Crónica de dos décadas de política colombiana 1968-1988* (Bogotá: CEREC, 1989); Jonathan Hartlyn, *La política del régimen de coalición. La experiencia del Frente Nacional en Colombia* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 1993); Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Although I'm very much in agreement with the claim that during the Cold War in Latin America there was a politicization and internationalization of everyday life, and that the hard-fought battles happened on the ground, it is difficult to discern the role of the middle class in recent work. Proposing a dichotomy between revolution and counter revolution, Grandin argues that the fight against Guatemala's burgeoning revolutionary movement was directed by "middle-class ideologues." Then,

different changes in the historical context, but we have failed to consider how those very changes have altered the very meanings and practices of being middle class—that is to say, to decipher the historical formation of the middle class as a political project of class rule.

To be sure, my purpose is not to pile up counter-examples of the political agency of the middle class. Nor is it my aim to see if middle-class actors supported certain political movements. Instead, by looking specifically at the first years of the National Front as a vital moment of Colombia's Cold War history, I demonstrate how these professionals organized themselves in meaningful collective action *as a class* to structure what they usually referred to as a *middle-class democracy*.<sup>22</sup> In doing so, I endeavor to interrogate how they challenged their (transnational) role as best governors by structuring an alternative democracy that worked *through*—rather than against or in favor of—the consolidation of a new hierarchical class rule. These

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by implication, these middle-class ideologues would be placed on the side of the counter-revolution. Certainly, I have no doubt that these anti-communist Catholic students played such a role. Indeed, as Grandin argues, they were responsible for the worst acts of counterinsurgency. My question is, then, how that political task became part of a project of middle-class rule? We too quickly assume these were middle-class members at expense of a more complicated historical analysis about the political formation of the middle class *as a class*. If we are able to historically connect those “reactionary” political activities as part of a larger political movement as a middle class, we would be in very good position, as I hope it become clear in this dissertation, to criticize the discourses and practices of democracy. Also, Grandin's generalizations on the Cold War in Latin America are based upon the rather thin example of the Guatemalan case. My point is not to argue against this specific historical case—he, in fact, demonstrates quite well how the Guatemalan case initiated a reworking of practices of U.S. intervention that sought to kill (literally) new definitions of social democracy. I would say that his conclusion that the Cold War in Latin America was mainly characterized by a sharp dichotomic distinction between revolution and counterrevolution may elide class struggles and gender-based political movements against U.S. domination that did not necessarily fall into any of these categories—or for that matter were reactionary and revolutionary at the very same time. Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*; See also Joseph and Spenser, *Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> For this reading, see Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space and Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); See also Gyan Prakash and Kevin M Kruse, *The Space of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics and Everyday Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1-19

professionals campaigned to become not the center of attraction between laboring classes and elites, but rather, and I would argue quite emphatically, the “head of the society.” In this political campaign of class politics, I contend, professionals engaged with U.S. imperial projects struggled with the oligarchs and the laboring classes to, as they constantly argued, bring about a revolution to transform an “undemocratic, antiquated and traditional society of classes” into a “democratic and modern middle-class society.” This represented a new democratic political campaign that questioned as much as it rigidified class-based hierarchical rule; a political democratic movement that disturbed as much as it reinforced gender distinctions.

As a whole, I seek here to question those ahistorical arguments that see democracy as a purified universal ideal that is immune to contamination by class or gender hierarchies. Historians still widely reproduce a teleology of democratic rule that presents a linear history describing a stage marked by particularistic and undemocratic class and gender hierarchies that then evolves into a politics that has moved beyond class-based rule and gender distinctions. This dissertation attempts to disrupt these long-standing assumptions by moving the historical analysis from fixed and purified preconceptions of the relationship between the middle class and democracy to a historicized understanding of how that very relationship was possible at all and to understand the different practices of rule and the meanings associated with it. In so doing, I argue that democracy—as an idea and as political practice—was imbricated with new imperial forms of hierarchical rule emerging during the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, I contend that Colombian professionals, in the very process of constituting themselves as middle class, challenged this imperial hierarchical rule



by creating a new and alternative democracy that also worked through the structuring of a class-based hierarchical rule.

### **Sources and Methodology—Along the Archival Grain**

The transformation of archival activity is the point of departure and the condition of a new history.<sup>23</sup>

I am able to put forward several of these arguments due to my good fortune in uncovering numerous archival collections. I have relied on an eclectic array of archives and sources—from transnational/imperial archives such as the U.S. National Archives, those of the Organization of American States, and the United Nations, those of Colombian state agencies and middle-class political organizations, as well as professionals' private collections. The discovery of these new sources, however, also required, as de Certeau suggests, a new critical approach in order to read them. If we were to summarize, as Ann Stoler has recently argued, what has informed the critical understanding of the archival material over the last ten years or so, it would be fair to say that historians and social scientists alike have developed sophisticated critical perspectives to read those archival documents “against the grain.”<sup>24</sup> As part of a larger scholarly project to uncover the crucial participation of subaltern groups in the formation of colonial and postcolonial hegemonic processes in different

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<sup>23</sup> Michael de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 75.

<sup>24</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002), 87-109. Stoler argues, for instance, that “however we frame it, the issues turn on readings of the archives based on what we take to be evidence and what we expect to find...how can we brush against the grain without prior sense of their texture and granularity.” 100. In a similar vein, Antoinette Burton has recently argued that despite the central importance of the archive in historical inquiries, historians have paid little attention to the archives as an ethnographic site of rule. See Antoinette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories, Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Natalie Zenon Davis, *Fictions in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Roberto Gonzalez Echeverria, *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002).

historical moments and geographical locations, Latin Americanists have attempted to read against the grain of official government and what are conceived as elite sources as a means to shed light on the ways in which subalterns interpellated their perspectives in historical documents and thus left traces, gestures and language of their practices and consciousness—evidence that documented how those subaltern groups were able to resist, appropriate and negotiate systems of domination. Although very influenced by these works, this dissertation has a more sustained engagement with those archives as historical productions, as taxonomies of class hierarchical rule in the making and as an ethnographic site of disparate notions and conceptions of what constituted democratic practices. Furthermore, rather than just continuing to brush against the archive's received categories, we also need to decipher how those categories came into being—their regularities, logic, forms, contents, narratives as the very process along and through which class rule became possible. In short, as Stoler has provocatively argued, we need to read *along the archival grain*. In so doing, the dissertation proposes to see archival activity not only as an extractive process of documentation but also as an ethnographic one. In chapter 1, I work through and along the production and the content of policy papers, reports, letters of recommendation, job evaluations and teaching materials in Colombia and the United States as a means to decipher how an idea of the middle-class professional became inserted into a methodology of imperial/transnational rule. For the second chapter, I read the different class narratives put forward in teaching materials, field notes, social reports and unpublished papers to see how these sources were not merely the evidence of what these professionals were doing, but rather the

very ground through which these women and men could forge their project of middle-class hierarchical rule. Likewise, for the final chapter I critically read the content and the form of political petitions, letters, radio speeches, manifestos, and professional publications to see how those were produced in form and content to shape the very language and practice of the constitution of a middle-class democracy during the 1950s and 1960s.

### **Some Reflections**

It is by no means an accident that with the most recent U.S. imperial enterprise in place, numerous U.S. government officials and representatives of international organizations, along with experts, intellectuals, politicians, and scholars across the political spectrum have once again called for the consolidation of a “middle-class consensus” as a fundamental way to secure prosperity and political stability throughout the world.<sup>25</sup> By resurrecting and reworking some of the major arguments of 1950s modernization theory, these recent studies argue that this “global middle class” will overcome social inequalities, political “evils” and unequal economic distribution. That is, once “every society across the world” promotes the creation of the middle class, the desirability of the neoliberal and global social order will be

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<sup>25</sup> See, among others, Mead and Schwenniger, eds., *The Bridge to a Global Middle Class: Development, Trade and International Finance* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations/ Milken Institute Series on Financial Innovation and Economic Growth, 2003); Diane Davis, *Discipline and Development: Middle Class and Prosperity in South Asia and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Jacob S Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift: The Assault on American Jobs, Families, Health Care, and Retirement and How You Can Fight Back* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Thom Hartmann, *Screwed: The Undeclared War Against the Middle Class* (San Francisco: Berret-Koehler Publishers, 2006); Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For Colombia, see, among others, Juan Alfredo Pinto Saavedra, *La Hora de la Clase Media. Bases para la movilización política de los grupos intermedios en Colombia* (Bogotá: Artepel Impresores, 2006); Robak M Glassman. *The New Middle Class and Democracy in Global Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002).

“beyond question.”<sup>26</sup> This “global middle class,” furthermore, would counter globalization by, on the one hand, regulating national economies, and, on the other, disciplining democratic development worldwide. Furthermore, it is argued, the promulgation of a global middle class could save the United States from itself—that is, from its imperial practices—precisely because this middle class is putatively assumed as the requirement for the consolidation of democracy across the world.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout this dissertation I contend that the crucial task is to offer a kind of critical refusal to be seduced and immobilized by the facile normalization of a “global middle class” that appears as a transcendental political foundation for creating a *postclass* global society. I argue that we need to go beyond a futile discussion of whether these policies or political promises can become reality, or whether or not a global middle class can in fact create democratic societies. Instead, this dissertation subjects to historical critique the very question to which the middle class—both as a collective idea and as a practice of rule—has been offered as a

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<sup>26</sup> There have been several “policy papers” and studies arguing for the creation of a *global middle class*, a *middle-class consensus* or a *middle-class-oriented development*. See, among many others, the Inter-American Bank recent initiative *Building Opportunity for the Majority*. As Luis Alberto Moreno, president of this international institution, put it recently in the opening conference for the aforementioned initiative: “The middle class is the pillar of healthy economies and stable democracies.”

<http://www.iadb.org/NEWS/articledetail.cfm?Language=En&parid=&artType=SP&artid=3124>. (November 6, 2006.)

<sup>27</sup> Michael Lind, *American Way of Strategy: U.S. Foreign Policy and the American Way of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Here the American way of strategy is to create an American way of life—that is, a middle class—abroad. Only then could the U.S. be saved from (i.e., forego) its imperial practices. In a similar vein, Walter Russell Mead argues in his forthcoming book that the middle class can potentially promote the democratization of U.S. foreign policy by implementing a “middle-class development.” See his *American Foreign Policy and the Global Middle Class*, forthcoming. Also, Sherle R. Schwenninger has recently argued that “dedicating U.S. foreign policy to a rapid rise of a global middle class and to a new international ‘community of power’ would do far more for our security and future prosperity than a prolonged, openly declared war against Islamic jihadism. It would also help make us relevant again to the lives of millions of people—from Latin America to Africa to the Middle East to the Pacific—in a way that an agenda of fighting Islamic jihadism does not. See his article “Reconnecting to the World,” *The Nation*, June 29, 2005; and “Democratizing Capital,” *The Nation*, March 20, 2008.

transcendental (democratic) political response. I ask what were the historical conditions that allowed the very association between the expansion of U.S. rule in the Americas, the consolidation of new forms of democratic rule, and the formation of a professional middle class during the late 1950s and early 1960s? In wrestling with this question, the dissertation seeks to offer a history of the present by denaturalizing the historical association between democracy and the middle class. In doing so, I hope, the analysis can shed some light on futures we might not otherwise have been able to envision. It seeks to offer a historical critique to understand why the middle class as an idea and as practice of collective rule is yet again implicated in the current definitions of democracy, modernity, neoliberalism and globalization. If we continue to assume—rather than historically explain—the very relationship between democratic rule and the formation of the middle class, our historical inquiries into how power relationships are exercised will remain incomplete. If historians and social scientists alike continue to treat democracy as a transhistorical ideal detached from the constitution of power relationships, our opportunities to understand and question the globalized neoliberal order will remain limited. This dissertation seeks to provide a historical understanding, however provisional, of how democratic hierarchical rule operated during the late 1950s and 1960s, in the hope that, in doing so, it opens some doors to imagine new political language and new political practices to all of us who are longing to resist and challenge the exploitation created by the seemingly inexorable calculus of globalization and neoliberal capitalism.

## Chapter 1: Conscripts of U.S. Empire. The Historical Formation of a Professional Middle Class in Bogotá during the 1950s and early 1960s

One of the most arresting facts facing the entire free and democratic world in this second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that the conditions of the society have become such as to make the introduction and development of a democratic middle class essential and urgent...how are we going to achieve democracy, development and progress without a middle class? <sup>28</sup>

Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort<sup>29</sup>

Within the modern that has come into being, changes have taken place as the effect of dominant political power by which new possibilities are constructed and old ones destroyed. The changes do not reflect a simple expansion of the range of individual choice, but the creation of conditions in which only new (i.e., modern) choices can be made. The reason for this is that the changes involve the re-formation of subjectivities and the re-organization of social spaces in which subjects act and are acted upon. The modern state—imperial-colonial-post-colonial—has been crucial to these processes of construction/destruction. <sup>30</sup>

Recent studies repeatedly underline the post–World War II historical process through which the United States tried to push societies toward a liberal, democratic and capitalist modernity by promoting the creation of a stable, prosperous middle class inoculated against communism in the Americas. These historical narratives have operated under the shared assumption that a domestic “American way of life”—explicitly or implicitly embodied in the so-called middle-class nation—was transparently ready to be exported to the rest of the Western hemisphere.<sup>31</sup> If the whole process failed, some argue,

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<sup>28</sup> Letter from Richard W. Poston to Alberto Lleras Camargo, 12 December, 1960, Despacho Señor Presidente, 1960-1961, Folder: comercio exterior, Presidential Archive. (Hereafter PA)

<sup>29</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 2003), xxi.

<sup>30</sup> Talal Asad, “Conscripts of Western Civilization,” in *Civilization in Crisis: Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Christine Ward Gailey (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), 337.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen C. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1999); Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel

it was because, due to certain political and social conditions, Latin America was not ready for a democracy built around a middle class. Other argue that, despite the noble intentions of some U.S. policymakers to forge a middle class, U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War ended up weakening the democratic processes in the region as it “fortified illiberal forces, militarized societies” and limited the social definitions of democracy.<sup>32</sup> In light of these narratives, historians and social scientists alike have organized their historical inquiries by asking whether the Latin American middle class could potentially become a democratic force. In scholarly works, as well as foreign-policy studies, the strength of the middle class has always been regarded as the barometer of modern democracies.

Consequently, some scholars have argued quite strongly for the democratic role historically played by the middle class, while others have explained equally robustly how the middle class has been an antidemocratic historical force in Latin America. Still others have argued that the middle class has, indeed, been both in different contexts.<sup>33</sup> As I argued in the introduction, these scholarly debates have left the historical definitions and practices of democracy largely unquestioned precisely because we take for granted the

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Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David C. Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefele, and Michael E. Latham, eds., *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development and the Global Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2003) Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>32</sup> See Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre. Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago press 2004), xiv. I do not wish to argue that the United States did not play this role; however, my concern in this chapter is the very historical relation between democracy and the formation of a professional middle class in the consolidation of U.S. empire.

<sup>33</sup> For a historiographical essay on the middle class in Latin America, see Michael Jimenez, “The Elision of the Middle Class and Beyond: History, Politics and Development Studies in Latin America’s ‘Short Twentieth Century,’ ” in *Colonial Legacies: The Problem of Persistence in Latin American History* (London: Routledge, 1999), 207-228.

very historical relationship between these practices and meanings and the political consolidation of a middle class.<sup>34</sup>

In this chapter I argue that the power of this ideal of a middle class fundamentally associated with the workings of democracy cannot be diminished merely by presenting counter-narratives of what it meant to be middle class in Latin America that challenge a political model associated with the United States or Europe. By looking at the formation of a professional middle class in Bogotá during the 1950s and 1960s, this chapter seeks to shift the register of the historical analysis away from questions about where, whether or to what extent a middle class has been an obstacle to or a promoter of democracy. Instead, I attempt to offer a critical interrogation of the historical practices and political rationalities through which a professional middle class became inserted in U.S. imperial rule after World War II: why, as suggested by the opening epigraph of this chapter, did it become so important to create a middle class as a political requirement for achieving progress and democracy? In doing so it is important not to lose sight of the concreteness of the historical meanings of being middle class; rather we might think about historical processes as conditions through which people like Alberto Valencia were conscripted to live, class-ify and indeed to guide themselves as members of a “governing” democratic middle class.

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<sup>34</sup> This argument has been influenced by recent studies on the anthropology of democracy. See Julia Paley “Toward an Anthropology of Democracy,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31 (2002): 469-496; See also Julia Paley, ed., *Anthropology of Democracy* (Santa Fe: School of Advanced Research Press, forthcoming); see also Daniel Walkowitz, *Working with Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle-Class Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).



## **Toward an Imperial Humanist Governance**

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, a new geopolitical order was emerging, characterized by conflicting camps aligned with the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as by renewed challenges to the legitimacy of European colonial rule. New political questions, answers, forms and methods entered into the conceptualization of how rule should be accomplished. In 1939, the United States government set up its first organized and systematic technical cooperation program with Latin America as a part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy. The new program sought to give technical advice, on request, to the government of any American nation. With the potential involvement of the nations of the Western Hemisphere in World War II in mind, an executive order from President Roosevelt established the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. Nelson Rockefeller was appointed to this position and shortly thereafter constituted the Institute for Inter-American Affairs, a government-owned corporation that was authorized to carry out cooperative programs with Latin America governments to promote public health, housing, economic development, public administration and agricultural development. In 1944, a similar corporation, the Inter-American Educational Foundation, was organized to provide similar hemispheric cooperation in support of elementary and secondary schools. These Latin American experiences prepared the United States to undertake the Point IV program of technical cooperation on a transnational basis, which, following Truman's inaugural presidential address of 1949, initiated a major program to promote technical assistance, modern technology, knowledge exchange and capital investment. The International Development Act, approved by the U.S. Congress in 1950, supplied financial assistance to carry out

many technical cooperation programs. In the same year, the Office of Technical Cooperation Administration was founded as part of the Department of State. Simultaneously, several recently established international and transnational institutions—including the Organization of the American States, the United Nations, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development—inaugurated an integrated set of liberal economic development policies, technical assistance plans, social welfare activities, population improvement programs and cultural management agendas.<sup>35</sup>

These reforms, technical programs and social policies constituted a reconfiguration and re-conceptualization of the legitimate forms and methods through which to exercise imperial rule. More specifically, policymakers, institutional “experts,” consultants, intellectuals and politicians engaged themselves in a debate about how to overcome what Harry Truman called, in 1949, “the old imperialism.”<sup>36</sup> Economic insecurity and fear of colonial unrest, as well as real and imagined concerns for the spread of communism provoked or accelerated debates regarding how imperial rule should be accomplished and made it a central political question.<sup>37</sup> Intellectuals,

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<sup>35</sup> For a general survey of post-World War II and U.S. policies toward the postcolonial world, see Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World: United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1988); Odd Wesstad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Peter Lhahn and Mary Ann Heiss, eds., *Empire and Revolution: The United States and the Third World since 1945* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001); H.W Brands, *The Specter of Neutralism: The United States and the Mergence of the Third World, 1947-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

<sup>36</sup> Harry Truman “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949,” in *The Presidents Speak. The Inaugural Addresses of the American Presidents from Washington to Clinton*. David Newton Lott (ed) (New York: Henry Holt, 1994) See also Maria Jose Saldaña Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination on the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Cary Fraser, “Understanding American Policy Toward Decolonization of European Empires, 1945-1964,” *Diplomacy and State* 3:1(March 1992); David Ryan and Victor Pungong (eds.), *The United States and Decolonization: Power and Freedom* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000); Alyosha Goldstein, “Civic Poverty: An Empire for Liberty through Community Action” (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 2005). Alyosha Goldstein, “The Attributes of Sovereignty. The Cold War, Colonialism and Community

policymakers in Colombia and the United States, experts asked: What were the most effective ways to govern? What were the adequate methods to do so? Who was able to be effective in the arts of governing? Who should govern whom? What were the training technologies needed to produce effective governments? What governance methodologies were most productive in ruling social and political relationships in society?

According to many documents from this era, the “old imperialism” was no longer an adequate basis for overseas expansion and influence. The new U.S. political agenda in the world was, in contrast to unnamed European colonial rule, to promote democracy, spread freedom and invite those people in underdeveloped areas into a process of self-governance. As Truman put it in the formalization of the Point Four program at the end of the 1950s,

The old imperialism—exploitation for foreign profit—has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing.... Only by helping the least fortunate of its members to help themselves can the human family achieve the decent, satisfying life that is the right of all people. Democracy alone can supply the vitalizing force to stir the peoples of the world into triumphant action, not only against their human oppressors, but also against their ancient enemies—hunger, misery and despair...Slowly but surely we are weaving a world fabric of international and growing prosperity....We are aided by all who desire self-government and a voice in their own affairs. We are aided by all who long for economic security—for the security and abundance that men in free societies can enjoy. We are aided by all who desire freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom to live their own lives for useful ends.<sup>38</sup>

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Education in Puerto Rico in Sandhya Shukla and Heidi Tinsman, ed., *Imagining Our Americas*. As Goldstein shows, these programs on community development informed the initiatives by Johnson and the programs on poverty in the United States.

<sup>38</sup> Truman, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949,” 297. See Maria Jose Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination on the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

William W Beatty, an educational consultant for community development programs went further. In 1958 he wrote an extensive letter to the United Nations Technical Assistant program in community development in Colombia insisting on the need for different practices when “approaching the underdeveloped world.”<sup>39</sup> History, he wrote, had not allowed the United States to have a period of preparation before its assumption of “international leadership responsibility,” as it had Britain and Europe. And precisely because it was unprepared, the United States had made “terrible mistakes” in its foreign relations with the rest of the world.

It was this very same history, however, that would indeed prepare the United States to assume a “leadership role in the world affairs.” By drawing a specific parallel between the American War of Independence and the mid-twentieth century decolonization process, for instance, a U.S. agency report in 1954 portrayed the United States as the model to emulate in what was considered a universal struggle against tyranny. As the first colony liberated through democratic revolution and industrial capitalism, this report went on, the United States could instinctively relate to the historical situation of “dependent and colonial peoples.” As a result, the United States could potentially be ready to help, rather than hinder, the spread of democracy and liberty. History, the report concluded, would be the background to sponsor the development of political independence across the world.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Nations Technical Assistant to Colombia, 1956, United Nations Archive (Hereafter, UNA), TE 322/1col-so175-0310-06. See also, Reports, Mission to Colombia, Miscellaneous, Subject files (1952-1959), United States Mission to Colombia, United States Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948-1961, United States National Archives, Record Group 469 (hereafter NAR469).

<sup>40</sup> Brief of Militant Liberty project, 22 October 1954, NARA, Department of State, Lot 62 D 430, Record Relating to State Department Participation in the OCB and the NSC, 1947-1963, Box 8, Miscellaneous, 1953-1956, as quoted in Scott Lucas, *Freedom's War: The American Crusade Against the Soviet Union*

History, however, was not enough. It was necessary to depart from what was considered the practices of “old imperialism.” If Truman believed that U.S. involvement in the region, because of its lack of interest in foreign profit, could be distinguished from European colonial rule, several policymakers argued otherwise. Ward Hunt Goodenough, a professor of anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania and an active writer on programs for community development, contended in 1957 that U.S. foreign programs in the first half of the twentieth century had primarily been geared to what he called “economicism.”<sup>41</sup> Like former European colonizers, Goodenough argued, the United States had only been concerned to offer, at worst, bread and roads, and, at best, agricultural technology.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, this old imperialism, several U.S. policymakers argued, was based upon practices of “domination, imposition and subjugation.” These practices assumed that those people in the underdeveloped countries were, first of all, passive recipients of economic aid, second, victims of their own situations and, third, unable to “think...act...feel and desire by themselves.”<sup>43</sup> In contrast to both European colonial rule and earlier U.S. economicism, America now would use “more imagination and implement multiform approaches” when exercising its so called “new leadership role.” If old imperialism—and its inherent economicism—was a manifestation of

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(New York: New York University Press, 1999), 224. See also Alyosha Goldstein, *Civic Poverty: An Empire for Liberty through Community Action*, 45.

<sup>41</sup> Record relating to Colombia, International Technical Assistance, 250/63 104 12-3 (1951-1959), Department of the State, United States National Archives, Record Group NARG59.

<sup>42</sup> Record relating to Colombia, International Technical Assistance, 250/63 104 12-3 (1951-1959), Department of the State, United States National Archives, Record Group NARG59.

<sup>43</sup> Record relating to Colombia, International Technical Assistance, 250/63 104 12-3 (1951-1959), Department of the State, United States National Archives, Record Group NARG59. See also, IAS, Box 17, Office of Inter-American Regional Economic Affairs, 1950-1963, NARG59; Health and Sanitation (1952-1954), Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948-1961, NARG469.

domination, America would now develop an international role which would depend upon “negotiation ...engagements... social contracts, compromises, exchanges of interests, meaningful encounters, and understandings.” If old imperialism, furthermore, was based on imposition, the United States would approach other regions “by being sensitive” to their “cultural differences.” And if old imperialism worked by subjugating and marginalizing the people of the underdeveloped world, the United States’ self-designated leadership role would rely on inquiring as to what the people wanted, desired and thought. Furthermore, America would fight subjugation by restoring the people’s participation, giving them a voice and promoting “the real possibility that underdeveloped countries [had] interests... [and] autonomy to shape their own destiny.”<sup>44</sup> Above all, Beatty argued, the United States would seek to develop a role that could break from previous practices and understandings of an old imperialism in which underdeveloped countries were only able to do what “powerful countries commanded” them to do, and instead foster the “active participation” and “constant consultation and representation” of the underdeveloped countries. In doing so, the United States would be promoting the “development [of ] human welfare.”<sup>45</sup>

This concern for human welfare, University of Chicago professor Nelson B. Henry argued, was at the very center of American democracy—one that had been built upon the proposition that each “human being in himself is significant.” As a nation, Henry continued, the United States was being challenged to develop the maturity to

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<sup>44</sup> Record relating to Colombia, International Technical Assistance, 250/63 104 12-3 (1951-1959), Department of the State, United States National Archives, Record Group 59 (hereafter NARG59).

<sup>45</sup> Reports, Mission to Colombia, Miscellaneous, Subject files (1952-1959), United States Mission to Colombia, United States Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948-1961, NAR 469; See also, Organization of American States, TCP, project 22, Office of Inter-American Affairs, NARG 59.

conceive a large “democratic plan” with other nations which, he said, were actuated by the desire to help meet the needs of people in communities everywhere because “human beings are involved.”<sup>46</sup>

These discussions should not be dismissed as merely meant to mystify, mask, dissimulate or even rationalize imperial relations.<sup>47</sup> Nor were they a search for hegemonic consent; rather, and most fundamentally, they constituted the formation of a new problematic of rule—a new process of governmentality through which an imperial project could become central to the formation of the U.S. nation.<sup>48</sup>

It is very tempting to understand or dismiss these imperial discourses as a false ideology intended to obscure the Realpolitik of empire or as a denial of U.S. imperialism or as the manifestation of U.S. imperial exceptionalism. Indeed, I am not attempting to argue that the United States was promoting “democratic practices” at the same time that it was promoting “anti-democratic practices” by invigorating Latin American militaries, orchestrating military interventions, and supporting centralized intelligence agencies.<sup>49</sup> In

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<sup>46</sup> Reports, Mission to Colombia, Miscellaneous, Subject files (1952-1959), United States Mission to Colombia, United States Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948-1961, NAR 469.

<sup>47</sup> See Grandin, *Last Colonial Massacre*, 10.

<sup>48</sup> See Michael Foucault, *Security, Territory and Population. Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and *Nacimiento de la biopolítica* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica), 2007; Thomas Lemke, “‘The Birth of Bio-Politics’ – Michel Foucault’s Lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality,” in: *Economy & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2001. Thomas Lemke, “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique,” *Rethinking Marxism*, 14. Jg., No. 3, 2002. David Scott, “Colonial Governmentality,” in Jonathan Xavier Inda, *Anthropologies of Modernity. Foucault, Governmentality and Life Politics*; Nikolas Rose *Power of Freedom. Reframing political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Most of the studies on governmentality has focused on North Atlantic societies. For views on postcolonial contexts, see David Scott, “Colonial Governmentality,” in Jonathan Xavier Inda, ed., *Anthropologies of Modernity*, 23-49; see also Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Donald S Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 10.

fact, I concur with the findings of recent studies that show how the U.S. funded, sponsored and trained Latin American domestic intelligence agencies throughout the Americas that then executed and tortured thousands of Latin Americans who were putting different definitions of democracy into practice. Colombia was certainly not an exception.<sup>50</sup> However, I wish here to critically interrogate one practice of rule—I would argue, a very important one that has not received critical assessment—in the large inventory of U.S. practices of rule during the second half of the twentieth century.

It may seem obvious that my arguments thus far are substantially influenced by Michael Foucault's writings on the arts of government and political rationalities of rule. Although governmentality has been understood in multiple ways, I understand it as the *integrated* process of the historical formation of two components of rule: on the one hand, political rationalities (the plural logics of rule a state produces in order to be seen as a state and work accordingly) and, on the other, technologies and methodologies of rule (how rule should be fashioned and accomplished).<sup>51</sup> This integrated process, *government* and *mentality*, Foucault argued, assembles institutions, produces knowledge, consolidates contradictory strategies, promotes paradoxical methodologies of rule and generates specific social relations so that conduct—the capacity of social groups, collectivities and individuals to act upon themselves and others—can be shaped, guided and orchestrated.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Forrest Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia* (New York: Verso Books, 2006). Hylton reproduces several arguments Colombian historians have done for long time. For him, La Violencia was a “huge historical regression.” Interestingly enough, this very same argument was repeatedly used by policymakers during the consolidation of the National Front. See also Doug Stokes, *America's Other War: Terrorizing Colombia* (New York: London Books, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> Here, I would like to emphasize that what I am after is not to link imperial state formation to a development of a reason in general, a process of rationalization, *à la Weber*, but rather an interrogation of a logic of rule imperial state produces.

<sup>52</sup> David Scott, “Political Rationalities of the Jamaican Modern,” *Small Axe* 7:2 (2003) 1-22.



Building on these understandings, I argue that the U.S. government, along with several international institutions, would set in motion new practices of governance, as well as a new political rationality underlying them, during the 1950s and 1960s. One of the major specific effects of these practices was the consolidation of community development programs in different parts of the world.<sup>53</sup> Despite the discourse critiquing

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<sup>53</sup> There has been a growing literature on development as a historical configuration of knowledge and power. See A.F. Robertson, *People and the State: An Anthropology of Planned Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Frederique Appfel-Marglin and Stephan Marglin, eds., *Dominating Knowledges: Development, Culture and Resistance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); James Ferguson, *The Anti-politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Akhil Gupta, *Post Colonial Development: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). In his widely cited and discussed book, Arturo Escobar provides a "general view of the historical construction of development and the Third World as a whole" in which developmentalism appears as an internally coherent discourse and as the most influential single force shaping development. The emergence of community development programs, when briefly discussed, are seen as a way of masking a larger historical meaning of more powerful development programs without necessarily transforming the discourse as a whole. Interestingly enough, Escobar repeatedly calls for a "move away from development sciences" and recommends studying "hybrid cultures at the local level in the third world peripheries." This call, I would like to argue, was very much at the center of discourses of "development sciences." In framing development as unified, single and coherent discourse, I believe, Escobar misses the very important programs on community development. Scholars should be encouraged to rethink the way how Escobar constructs his object of criticism—development—as a singular phenomenon that impinges on local spaces in the non-Western world: a singular, bounded and internally coherent phenomenon whose main objective is to disempower people at the local level. See Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 14, 18, 36. Recent studies on development after War World II have increasingly focused on the technical assistant programs of development and how these programs subscribed to the modernist idea that societies moved through stages of development. Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*; David C Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H Haefele, and Michael Latham, *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development and the Global Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Anthropological and historical studies along these lines have denounced development as a tool that serves the transnational interest of corporations against post-colonial peoples and states. See Gupta, *Postcolonial Development*. Development programs and international institutions activities, the argument goes, produced modern discourses that crushed or ignored people's agency by disempowering forms of subjectivities like "underdeveloped," illiterate or "poor" at the local level. And still others have deemed the development experiences as "anti-political machine" which merely masks the deeply political constitution of its practices under the seemingly objective managerial and technical discourses. I think we really need to move the historical analysis away from the categorization of development as either a failure or success and, rather, question the very framework that leads us to categorize development in such a particular, supposedly universal, way. See, for example, Tania Murray Li, *The Will to Improve. Governmentality, Development and the Practice of Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

old imperialism, the very first attempts at community development drew heavily on the experiences of the British colonial administration with rural social projects in India, as well as community-based organizing prototypes in Mexico, Bolivia and the Tennessee Valley during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>54</sup> Significantly, the early versions of these programs appeared in Puerto Rico and the Philippines during the late 1940s. By the early 1950s, the U.S. government, together with international institutions, was consolidating a variety of community development programs. In doing so, and in seeking to distinguish themselves from an imagined old imperialism, these programs were shaped by a political rationality—simultaneously mediated by the production of knowledge in social sciences, cultural anthropology, psychology, rural sociology and other social sciences—that promoted rule through the capacities and productivities of the human being. Older social programs, it was argued, were centered only on, at best, financial and technical problems, and at worst, “coercively imposing, destroying or disempowering and marginalizing people’s participation.”<sup>55</sup> These new community development programs would incorporate, in contrast, a “cultural and socially sensitive approach” that would take into account how people in the underdeveloped areas of the world were “socially and

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<sup>54</sup> Murray G Ross, *Community Organization: Theory, Principles and Practice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955); Ernest B Harer and Arthur Dunham, ed., *Community Organization in Action* (New York: Association Press, 1959); British Information Services, *Community Development: The British Contribution* (London: Stationary Office, 1962); James Dahir, *Region Building: Community Development Lessons from Tennessee Valley* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955.) Team number II, *Report on Community Development Programs in Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Bolivia and Peru* (Washington, DC: International Cooperation Administration, 1 November 1955); For Colombia see Orlando Fals Borda “Acción Comunal en una vereda colombiana” in *Monografías Sociológicas* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1960).

<sup>55</sup> Consideraciones de la importancia de los programas de desarrollo de la comunidad en varios países de America Latina, 1956/ Informe del Grupo de Expertos sobre la Planificación del Desarrollo Económico y Social de America Latina. Documents attached to Minutes of Inter-America Economic and Social Council of the Organization of the American States (Reuniones Extraordinarias), 1 may, 1958, X I VI, documentos 0-49, Organization of American States Columbus Library and Archives (hereafter OASCA)

culturally embedded human subjects.” In so doing, it was argued, the United States’ “leadership role” would depend upon constant encounters leading to “social arrangements” to make the communities of the underdeveloped world, through proper guidance, “best utilize the *human capital* and natural resources available in promoting the interests of their own communities.”<sup>56</sup>

Imperial governance, then, was to take place neither by coercively imposing, destroying or marginalizing people’s participation nor by educating consent, but, most basically, *through* a process of conducting, schooling, guiding, and encouraging proper forms of self-government, self-discipline, and self-guidance that targeted “people’s talents...human abilities, people’s actions, human aspirations, interests, desires, feelings, and beliefs.” In a word, a new imperial project was to target what policymakers, intellectuals and politicians constantly came to refer to as *human capital*. A letter from the United Nations Assistance Program for Latin America to the office of foreign assistance of the U.S. Point Four program, for instance, argued that the objective of community development was to consolidate community’s “*natural democratic* political potential” by guiding them into the “participatory process.”<sup>57</sup> According to several Inter-American conferences sponsored by the Organization of American States, U.S. Technical Assistance Programs and the United Nations, the task was to “give the people of

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<sup>56</sup> Technical Assistant to Colombia, 1956, UNA, TE 322/1col-so175-0310-06. My emphasis. *Informe del Grupo de Expertos sobre la Planificación del Desarrollo Económico y Social de América Latina*. Documents attached to Minutes of Inter-America Economic and Social Council of the Organization of the American States (Reuniones Extraordinarias), 1 may, 1958, X 1 VI. Documentos 0-49, OASCA. My emphasis.

<sup>57</sup> Technical Assistant to Colombia, 1956, UNA, TE 322/1col-so175-0310-06. My emphasis.

underdeveloped countries a *political power* ...[to] recognize their active role” in the development and the progress of their nations.<sup>58</sup>

In the process of guiding this human capital, the political task was to create a new sense of the self, a transparent self-owning subject who could think and feel about his or herself with enormous capabilities, and who had the properties to act upon that self and upon others. Indeed, the individuals in question would be autonomous and self-contained subjects who would be able to exercise “agency” by organizing their life, by knowing who they were, by deciding how to improve their situation and by participating in the solution of the different problems created by underdevelopment. They would be “free...virtuous, self-disciplined,” democratic and conscious subjects who could be guided in how to evaluate, motivate and criticize themselves so as to help themselves to “desire progress and democracy.”<sup>59</sup> As Gabriel Kaplan, an expert in community development who worked in several programs throughout the world put it in 1956,

[Community development] is a process of releasing, through effective leadership, the enormous potential that resides within people who discover through their own efforts they can improve the usefulness of their own lives...a democratic process to use democratic potential...make people truly free and democratic.<sup>60</sup>

Again, although several authors would quickly see these programs at best as a dissimulating rhetoric masking the Realpolitik of U.S. imperialism, I want to argue that

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<sup>58</sup> Technical Assistant to Colombia, 1956, UNA, TE 322/1col-so175-0310-06. Inter-American conference 1953 and Reports, Miscellaneous, Project Colombia XXV and Colombia IV, Office of the Chief Subject Files (1952-1959), Mission to Colombia, U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies (1948-1961), NARG 469.

<sup>59</sup> IAS, 17, TCP, 1950s, Office of Inter-American Affairs (1950-1963), NARG 59; Health and Sanitation (1952-1954), Records of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948-1961, NARG 469

<sup>60</sup> Project Colombia IV, Organization of American States, Technical Assistant to Latin America, Office of Inter-American Affairs (1950-1963), NARG 59; Kaplan worked in programs in the Philippines during the 1950s and was very involved in the constitution of community development in Colombia. Some years later, it was revealed, he was also a CIA agent.

by critically looking at these discourses and practices on community development, it is possible to offer a different historical reading of the methodology of U.S. imperial rule and transnational governmentality. I want to put discourses, practices and experiences of what soon came to be called *community development* at the very center of the U.S. Empire. Furthermore, I submit, these programs of development set in motion an imperial project of rule working within a transnational framework every bit as powerful as the better-known programs of U.S. military and economic imperialism. Although in operation since the aftermath of World War II, these community development programs were consolidated during the 1950s and more forcefully implemented with the launching of the Alliance for Progress in 1961. These programs activated a political rationality that usually was oriented toward several mutually inclusive projects of economic development, human welfare and proper political preparation to live in what policymakers and experts constantly referred to as modern democracy.

In putting these community development programs at the very center of U.S. policies, these transnational projects sought to engage those most affected by poverty to improve the economic, cultural, and political conditions of their “own societies.” In doing so, “poor populations of the world” could “learn to understand their own current situation, the disastrous effects of poverty for them, their families, and their countries.”<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, this “new mentality” would enable the emergence of a “society [where] human beings” would be able to “take care of themselves and others.” Indeed, it would mean a consolidation of what I want to call a *society of governors* where the poor could be guided according to their own social interests so they would

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<sup>61</sup> Community Organization and Development, Colombia (Colo, 250), 1956, UNA s 0175-03334-02.

politically govern themselves by first contributing to their own economic progress and development, and, second, and perhaps more importantly, by living “in freedom and democracy.”<sup>62</sup>

This transnational society of governors would be possible if, and perhaps only if, the social, political and economic agency of the people of the underdeveloped world could be reshaped.<sup>63</sup> For so long, those who conceptualized these programs argued, an “authoritative approach” had merely used a “top-down” relationship to deposit ideas and knowledge on passive recipients who had no active role in shaping their society. In stark contrast, it was argued, the (new) community development paradigm would work within a “democratic framework.” They would promote “bottom-up social approaches” to create “truly participatory and democratic space[s]” where the people would be able to develop their own ideas, their own cultures, enhance their own capabilities, become aware of their own problems, evaluate their own conditions and, above all, understand what goals they are able to reach.<sup>64</sup> By stimulating, comprehending, and adapting to the ideas, activities, cultural limitations, social conditions and sentiments of the poor, furthermore, community development programs would transform passive subjects into active ones—indeed, they would alter “submissive socially constrained” subjects into “fully self-

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<sup>62</sup> Community Organization and Development, Colombia (Colo, 250), 1956, UNA s 0175-03334-02. See also IAS, TCP, 17, Office of Inter-American Regional Economic affairs (1950-1963.), NARG 59; See also Reports, Miscellaneous, Project Colombia XXV and Colombia IV, Office of the Chief Subject Files (1952-1959), Mission to Colombia, U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies (1948-1961), NARG 469.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from William H Olson to José Ricaute García, August 5, 1959, Programas Rurales y Desarrollo de la Comunidad, Fomento, Project Colombia IV and Colombia XXV, Minister of Agriculture, Colombian-American Cooperative Technical Service in Agriculture Archive (hereafter, STACA)

<sup>64</sup> Housing Programs, project IV and Colombia XXV, Mission to Colombia, Office of the Chief Subject Files (1952-1959), Records of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, NARG 469.

determined” selves capable of acting according to their own self-interest so they will do as they ought in a democratic environment.<sup>65</sup>

By gaining a voice and participating in their own betterment, the poor people of the Third World countries would become conscious of their oppressed position. And precisely for this reason, it was imperative to know how to guide the energies, political capital, and human potential of the poor in their “imminent awakening.” A human being had to be democratically trained—by letting them speak, by taking care of them, by promoting their participation—so that they, in the process of political awakening, could be guided into knowing how to become governors of themselves. Only then, it was argued, would the people of the Third World be able to exercise their “power of decision, intelligence, their freedom and their autonomy” to enter into a society of self-governors, where they would be “responsible, complete and free” to recognize, understand and, above all, resolve their own problems. As Caroline Ware, a professor at Howard University, put it in one of the several studies sponsored by the Organization of American States during the 1950s,

[Community development programs] will lead to a sense of social human solidarity...a concept of conscious, willful and enthusiastic participation of the underdeveloped people. The programs assume the recognition of the natural existence of the latent potential of the community, of the human dignity. It recognizes the people’s power of decision, their autonomy and their freedom...restores their active role in society...It is a timely restitution of the responsibility of the community to face and plan consciously and rationally the solution of their most felt problems. Community development programs will not frustrate, as several [have done so] in the past, the authentic interest of the communities. It is based on the real belief that people are able to live in democracies...exercise their role in shaping societies.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Housing Programs, project IV and Colombia XXV, Mission to Colombia, Office of the Chief Subject Files (1952-1959), Records of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, NARG 469.

<sup>66</sup> Caroline Ware, *Organización de la comunidad para el bienestar social* (Washington, DC: Organization of American States, 1956) 35; UNESCO, *La educación para el desarrollo de la comunidad* (Paris:

This process yields a consolidation of a new form of rule—a governmentality—that I will refer to as *imperial humanist government*. During the 1950s and 1960s, this *govern-mentality* was based on a political rationality that promoted human welfare, economic development, and political training so that the people of the underdeveloped world could participate profitably and democratically in the process of their own rule. This mentality worked in an integrated relationship with new technologies of government that sought not to subjugate or impose but rather guide and negotiate those human capabilities and productivities, thus enabling social actors to become self-governing. In short, this imperial humanist governance was constantly seeking to make the Third World a society of governors—that is to say, to become capable of governing themselves.

### **The Role of the Middle Class in the Imperial Humanist Project**

Central to this imperial humanist project was the formation of a professional middle class. If it was crucial to engage the people of Latin America in the process of improving their own human welfare, economic development and political training, the simultaneous, and perhaps contradictory, process of schooling and guiding a professional middle class was imperative. Furthermore, imperial humanist governance was to take place not against or in favor of, but rather *through* democratic middle-class professionals who would be properly conducted, educated and oriented toward transforming the democratic relations between different social groups. That is, the conduct of the

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UNESCO, Centro de Intercambios de Educación, 1954). Caroline Ware would play a pivotal role in training middle-class professionals in Colombia, especially social workers. She worked in conjunction with Colombian experts—Orlando Fals Borda, Virginia Gutierrez de Pineda, Roberto Pineda Giraldo among several others—in the promotion of a professional middle class. See Caroline Ware, *El desarrollo de la comunidad y el trabajo social en América Latina: mis experiencias, 1945-1976* (Caracas: Editorial Ekiwá para Asociación Civil Escuela de Servicio Social, 1988).



professional middle class had to be guided so they could become competent and capable of organizing, distributing, stimulating, and creating the *necessary human capital* for “national democracies to emerge.”<sup>67</sup>

This democratic middle-class professional, conceived as an agent of transformation and a social catalyst, was to labor not only by helping the poor but, more importantly, helping the people to help themselves. The democratic middle-class professional was to create new “attitudes...desires...feelings, [and] social climates.” Indeed, they would develop new paths for the poor to follow, new lights for the people to see, new aspirations for the underdeveloped people to experience and new ways of life for the people to understand. They would be professionals skilled in the art of stimulating and helping people at the local level, in guiding them along a path of “planned progress” for change, friends and brothers of the community who could bring democracy in specific ways to the peasants, so the people would be able—through the professional guidance—to become self-governors.

Policymakers, intellectuals and experts in the Americas spent quite some time crafting and producing knowledge about the importance of this “democratic middle class.” According to several studies carried out by the United Nations, the Organization of American States as well as the Rockefeller Foundation, it was necessary to rationalize the tasks of national states by training these middle-class professionals, without whom, it was said, no governmental system could really function in any effective way. For democracy to work, it was urgent to have “intelligent [and] prestigious professionals” who would give themselves—that is, their minds, bodies and souls—to the tasks of the

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<sup>67</sup> Notificaciones para la Comisión Nacional para la Reforma Pública en Colombia, Community Organization and Development, Bogotá, 13 December, 1956, Colombia Technical Assistance Program, UNA(250) S 0175-03334-02.

state and the national ideals of “justice, freedom, progress, social change, democracy and community development.”<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the mission was to create a “human [and] democratic middle class” by putting to work a (new) class of political professionals who would develop the human capacities to relate to “all social classes in society” and to “freely” recognize the “value [and] worth of another social group,” and set up the conditions of “self-understanding.”<sup>69</sup>

Those middle-class professionals would work for the state by teaching the poor how to fight “ignorance, ill-health, and low productivity,” how to be aware of their “qualities and conditions,” and above all, how to think by—and certainly of—themselves so they were able to participate in democracy. As the minutes of the Inter-American Socio Economic Council of the Organization of the American States in Washington D.C. repeatedly argued in 1955,

A society that is full of middle-class professionals promoting the use of intelligence and the capabilities of the American man for the benefit, interests and aspirations of the American community...A professional who can break the inertia and put the essence of the poor in action.... A professional who could develop communities within themselves [and change] the social climate of receptivity and desires for democracy....professional that can fight the social isolation of the elites...They would put a *human face to capitalism*.<sup>70</sup>

And it is in this process that the formation of the middle class became inserted in a new methodology of democratic rule. This specific process of middle-class professionals became so integrated with explicit technologies of democratic government

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<sup>68</sup> Minutes of Inter-American Socio-Economic Council, 12 April, 1955, OEAR. See also, Material de Selección de personal, datos varios, 15 May, 1956, OEAR.

<sup>69</sup> Minutes of Inter-American Socio-Economic Council, 12 April, 1955, OEAR.

<sup>70</sup> Minutes of Inter-American Socio-Economic Council, 12 April, 1955, OEAR. See also, Políticas de personal y adiestramiento, February 1955, OEAR. My emphasis.

precisely because of a political rationality that promoted the creation of a society of governors who could develop themselves into “autonomous selves, capable of actively acting,” in the process of democracy according to their own “desires.” The new practices of rule had to be based upon the formation of a class of professionals working for national states and who could guide the desires, interests and, above all, the human capital of the different social groups in society—in contrast to an imagined “class of experts” who “forced upon individuals and groups what they [knew] was good.”<sup>71</sup>

Thus this imperial humanist governance created a hierarchical redistribution of tasks in which democratically “capable” professionals were able to guide certain “inherent responsibilities and obligations” of those who were not initially able to do so by themselves. For democracy to work effectively required a distinction between—yet close relation with—those who were “competent” to discover the “poor’s human capital” and those who needed such democratic professionals to discover their own human capital and political potential for progress and development. This assumed, furthermore, an asymmetrical relationship between those who were able to guide the poor to activate certain “latent democratic desires,” and those who needed guidance in order to use those desires on their own. This methodology of governance was to take place through a hierarchical allocation of specific roles that divided those who were “intelligent” enough to teach others how to think by themselves and those who needed somebody else to teach them how to think by themselves. It was a hierarchical division between those who had the capability to awaken the “dormant attitudes, democratic potential...and sentiments for

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<sup>71</sup> Minutes of Inter-American Socio-Economic Council, 12 April, 1955, OEAR. Propuesta para el establecimiento de un departamento de selección y una comisión de reclutamiento para profesionales al servicio del estado, Community Organization and Development, Colombia, Colom, Technical Assistance Program (250), S 0175-03334-02, February 9, 1959, UNA

change” of the society as a whole and those who needed the knowledge/sentiments of others to become aware of their own potential, sentiments and attitudes.

In sum, the United States, along with several international institutions, promoted a form of democratic rule to be achieved by constructing a class rule that rested on hierarchical distinctions between those who were guided to govern others and those who were expected to be governed by others. In the process, I would argue, this new form of imperial rule produced an ongoing need to define and redefine who could become the best governors in a society of governors. This ongoing need, furthermore, provoked endless transnational discussions on how to select and guide these professionals who, it was argued, would not only make “harmonious societies” but also, and equally important, create “national democratic states.”

### **The Middle Class as a “Center of Attraction”**

These transnational programs and activities for community development, and their concomitant middle-class labor force, were further consolidated in 1961 when the U.S. launched the Alliance for Progress. As a clear response to the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the Kennedy administration intensified, multiplied, and expanded already existing programs of community development that the U.S. hoped would deter the rise of communist insurgencies elsewhere in Latin America. Perhaps the most important episode precipitating the introduction of community development programs in Colombia was the spurt of the Violence (*La Violencia*) during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Erupting a full decade prior to the Cuban Revolution, this process greatly concerned the U.S. government, which had come to see ongoing social unrest in Latin America as a potentially “serious problem.” As one U.S. observer commented in the late 1950s,

No single event since the World War II has so violently revealed the revolutionary potential of our neighbors to the South as the aborted revolution of the past 9<sup>th</sup> of April in Colombia and the subsequent emergence of the Violence.<sup>72</sup>

These programs and policies on community development, however, went well beyond the concern with communist containment. Rather, these new initiatives were part of a transnational preoccupation to create a new form of democratic rule. Although in motion during the latter years of the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, the National Front administrations actively participated in the promotion of these community development programs as a way to overcome La Violencia. The National Front was a Liberal and Conservative power sharing arrangement that formally endured for sixteen years. Alberto Lleras Camargo and Guillermo León Valencia, the two first presidents of this power sharing arrangement constantly argued for a professionalization of the social relationship in order to overcome Colombia's turbulent recent past—that is to say, to avoid the return to La Violencia and create the conditions for democracy and peace to emerge. Specifically, the Technical Cooperation Administration developed as part of the Point Four program and USAID sponsored under the Alliance for Progress, not only provided funding to different programs but also coordinated several activities sponsored by other international institutions. And working within an inter-American framework, the United States Foreign Assistance began to send economic commissions to the so-called Third World as part of the process of formulating a program of development for Latin American countries. These offices, along with different international development institutions and U.S. private organizations, founded or sponsored technical centers, vocational schools, training

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<sup>72</sup> Sanchez, 10.

centers, universities and institutions to train professionals in different areas of technical knowledge and social sciences during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>73</sup> Soon after the enactment of the Point Four program by President Truman in 1949, and specifically after the U.S.-sponsored programs Colombia IV and Colombia XXV programs were formalized during the mid-1950s, the government of President Mariano Ospina (1946-1950) invited a mission organized by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to visit Colombia. It was the very first mission of this kind the bank sent to Latin America. Formulating a general development program for the country, the mission included discussion about foreign exchange, transportation, industry, service sectors, health and welfare. The final report issued by the mission repeatedly insisted on the “vital import” of the “assessment of middle class values and middle class participation in development” and the “training of talented professionals” as a crucial part of the renewal of the Colombian state.<sup>74</sup> The government of Laureano Gómez would embrace these policies by supporting the creation of the Colombian Social Security Institute (Instituto Colombiano de Seguros Sociales) as well as the Colombian Institute for Technical Education (Instituto Colombiano para la Educación Técnica en el Exterior) during the early 1950s.<sup>75</sup> The following administration, of Gustavo Rojas

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<sup>73</sup> Summary of Point IV in Colombia, Program Planning (1952-1959), Office of the Chief Subject Files, Record of U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies (1948-1961), NARG 469; See also Lauchlin Currie, *Reorganización de la Rama Ejecutiva del Gobierno de Colombia* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1952).

<sup>74</sup> Lauchlin Currie, *The Basis of a Development Program Report of a Mission* (International Bank for reconstruction and Development, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1950), 241,496-498, 543-549.

<sup>75</sup> James Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia. The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889-1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 323-347. See also Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). These years witnessed a 3 percent increase in public primary education. During the late 1940s and 1950s several universities were founded—Universidad de los Andes (1948) and Gran Colombia (1951), among many others. Elsewhere, I present a detailed description of the formal education during those years based on the careful reading of curriculum vitae in different archives.

Pinilla, sponsored additional social programs that were expanded during the caretaker military regime that held power for fifteen months after Rojas's overthrow. During the first years in office of the liberal-conservative party coalition, Alberto Lleras Camargo's administration would consolidate these programs and initiate systematic development programs.<sup>76</sup> His government constantly extolled the community development programs as a "state policy" and officially founded the Division of Community Action in 1959. And with the formalization of the Alliance for Progress, several more programs were launched through national private organizations (mainly FEDECAFE [Federación Nacional de Cafeteros]), together with international institutions such as the United Nations, the Organization of the American States and the World Health Organization, CARE [Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere], which promoted or sponsored educational institutions, training centers and universities in Colombia. During the 1950s and early 1960s, both state and private agencies worked together in founding rural schools (such as the Escuela de Servicio Rural) training centers (Inter-American Housing and Planning Center [CINVA]), agronomy schools, the Colombian-American Public Health Program (SCISP). This period also saw the expansion of the School of Social Work, the emergence of the Colombian- American Agricultural Technical Service (STACA) as well as the Advanced School for Public Administration (ESAP), the National Institute for Agrarian Reform (INCORA), and the Institute to Promote Industry (IFI).

Although it is tempting to argue that these institutions were merely a mask for imperial power, I would like to argue instead that the proliferation of these fragmented

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<sup>76</sup> James Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia. The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889-1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 323-347.

governing entities worked to expand everyday practices of state rule. As part of its effort to create the conditions in which democracy and peace could flourish, the National Front administrations were actively consolidating a form of rule through which the state could become concerned with the promotion of a “new meaningful community life.” The purpose, furthermore, was to guide Colombia to “reach social peace and economic justice, physical well-being and democracy.” In order to do so, said President Alberto Lleras Camargo, it was necessary to “create a new Colombian state ...a new Colombian nation ...fervently developing its resources and enriching the lives of its people where the great bulk of its population and where development really counts most: the local community. A local community with hope and ready for self-determination.” As Gerardo Tamayo Peña, chair of the division of the community action, put it in 1959,

It is an attempt to enable all members of the community to share, if they will, in the determination of their own joint destiny in freedom, democracy and dignity. Unquestionably, many communities most in need of this encouragement are plagued by deep uncertainties and massive problems. They may be eager to see their living conditions improved but lack confidence in their own agency [*protagonismo*] to do anything about them. Others lack the inner will, the desire, or the ambition to work for their own improvement. Many are not aware how to go about helping themselves even when they do feel such a desire. Ancient customs, attitudes, suspicions toward strangers and government agents and the inheritance of an unenviable social structure frequently make progress impossible or at best extremely difficult.<sup>77</sup>

As part of a national process of pacification and rehabilitation during the late 1950s and early 1960s, these ideas and practices of community action would work in tandem with the recent interest in the so-called Violencia, which was increasingly

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<sup>77</sup> Letter from Gerardo Tamayo to Gabriel Kaplan, 15 March, 1959, Despacho Señor Presidente, 1959, Comité de relaciones exteriores, PA.



becoming an epistemological object of contemplation. In response, not only were Colombian experts, governmental institutions and policymakers pondering (new) containment policies informed by sentiments concerning the real and imagined communist threat but also, and perhaps more importantly, they were confronting how rule should be accomplished—that is, as President Lleras Camargo put it in 1959, how “to *make social relations right*.”<sup>78</sup>

A year before the launching of the Alliance for Progress, for example, the international agency CARE signed a contract with the Colombian government to provide support, training and advice in community development. As part of this program, the Colombian government sent several “experts” to get involved in the U.S.-sponsored programs on community development in the Philippines and Puerto Rico. After these trips, Southern Illinois University professor Richard W. Poston—a prominent writer on community development and special consultant in Colombia on behalf on the U.S. government and CARE—wrote several letters to President Lleras Camargo describing the major problems Colombia was now facing, as well the “very first changes” that needed to be implemented in order to “enter into [a] meaningful democracy.” According to Poston, the problem was not the absence of a middle class in Colombia, but rather the persistence of one characterized by what Poston called an “anti-human consciousness.” To wit: a middle class, on the one hand, “set off from the lower classes...expressing disdain for the peasants and the working classes” and, on the other, preoccupied, or constantly aspiring, “to copy the way of life of the elites.” This anti-humanistic middle class, Poston continued, did not have a “productive relationship” with either the elites or with the poor.

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<sup>78</sup> Letter from Richard W. Poston to Alberto Lleras Camargo, 12 December, 1960, despacho señor presidente, 1960-1961, Folder: comercio exterior, PA. My emphasis.

And precisely because Colombia was facing “new challenges and changes,” it was necessary to redefine those “specific roles in society.” In order for a “democratic relationship to happen,” Poston proclaimed, what was needed was a

...new intelligent and feeling middle class. ... A responsible middle class ... a human middle class ... a middle class who would care for others. Agents of change to diffuse developmental ideals throughout the society ... put to work the necessary knowledge to achieve happiness. A truly professional middle class whose members become the pivot of development, democracy, peace and social justice.<sup>79</sup>

In a quick reply, Lleras Camargo acknowledged that in Colombia “there [had] not been a middle ground between the upper and the lower classes,” but he said he was certain a “democratic middle class [was] needed.” Drawing on ideas of community development, Lleras Camargo contended that a “democratic horizon...beyond violence” could become a reality as long as “social relations” pivoted around the middle class—that is to say, if Colombia became a society in which a democratic middle class was constantly “*the center of attraction*.”<sup>80</sup> Middle-class professionals would become, Lleras Camargo argued, a “humanistic force” to create “lasting relationships [*relaciones duraderas*] among different groups in society.” This humanistic class would help the elites to undergo a process of “self-renewal,” and above all, “transform their own social

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<sup>79</sup> Letter from Richard W. Poston to Alberto Lleras Camargo, 12 April 1960, despacho señor presidente, 1960-1961, Folder: comercio exterior, PA. The Lebrét mission—suggestively called *economy and humanism*—sponsored by the United Nations Technical Assistance and the United States program Colombia XXV argued that the main problem in Colombia had developed a “sociological morbidity.” This consisted of a middle class unable to designate or organize “the human capital of the nation” so both the elite and the popular classes could live in harmony. Comité Nacional de Planeación, *Misión Economía y Humanismo: Estudios sobre el desarrollo de Colombia* (Bogotá: Cromos, 1958)

<sup>80</sup> Letter from Alberto Lleras Camargo to Richard Poston, April, 12 1960, despacho Señor Presidente, 1960, folder, comercio exterior, PA. My emphasis.

principles.”<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, a professional middle class—by developing a solid knowledge of those “at the bottom of the society”—could “make the elites aware of [their] role in society,” could “place new social concerns” for the well-being of others at the very center of an “elite ethos,” and, perhaps most importantly, train the elites in the process of “sympathiz[ing]” with “the problems of poverty.”

On the other hand, the professional middle class, as a humanistic force, would also “channel the energies, capacities and capabilities of the poor.” In doing so, this democratic middle class would prepare the people to be able to “develop stronger relationships with the elites.” In a context in which the people had become aware of the oppressive role of the elite and their tendency to isolate themselves from society, place their well-being above that of other groups, and manifest neither interest nor sympathy for Colombia’s social problems, continued Lleras Camargo, middle-class professionals could be the path to a democratic horizon by “go[ing] down to the level of the peasants ... or workers” to be “sympathizers” while at the same time they could “travel” to the “upper classes” to become “well-informed [and] knowledgeable counselors [*consejero*] for the elites.”<sup>82</sup>

What was at stake in this discussion was a political question about how to create and allocate new social subjects with which a democratic state rule could be accomplished. As a *sympathizer* with the lower classes and as a *counselor* of the elites, democratic middle-class professionals could be hierarchically ordered as a “center of attraction” so they would be able to govern social relations in a society where peace and

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<sup>81</sup> Letter from Alberto Lleras Camargo to Richard Poston, April, 12 1960, despacho Señor Presidente, 1960, folder, comercio exterior, PA. Several intellectuals made similar arguments, particularly Orlando Fals Borda who was very involved in the consolidation of community development programs in Colombia. .

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

democracy were needed. The professional middle class became associated with the possibility of abandoning a confrontational style of politics and warding off communist practices. A middle class could put Colombian society above and beyond La Violencia by creating the conditions of social harmony and political peace.

In a fluid transnational dialogue, these concerns to create a middle class as a center of attraction were appropriated by several advisors from the Kennedy administration and the Alliance for Progress. Closely replicating the discussion between Lleras Camargo and Richard Poston, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Harvard historian and White House adviser, wrote to Kennedy that, above all, the Alliance should engineer

a middle class revolution where the processes of economic modernization carry the new urban middle class into power and produce, along with it, such necessities of modern technical society as a constitutional government, honest public administration, a responsible party system.<sup>83</sup>

It is important to emphasize that these political conceptualizations did not merely seek to establish a distinction between the middle class in relationship to the elite or lower classes.<sup>84</sup> Nor was it envisioned that the elites and the popular sectors would eventually become part of an ever-expanding middle class by appropriating certain values assigned to the middle class, as a requirement for social harmony. Instead, as is clear in these transnational dialogues, at issue was a reformulation of a hierarchical class rule to guide and conduct social relations democratically in the hope of overcoming La Violencia.

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<sup>83</sup> Memorandum, Schlesinger to Kennedy, March 10, 1961, Schlesinger Paper, box Wh14, "Latin America, Report 3/10/61," J.F. Kennedy Library.

<sup>84</sup> See Owensby, *Intimate Ironies*; Parker, *The Idea of the Middle Class*.

## Selecting Middle-Class Professionals

Recent years have seen a new level of scholarly interest in the formation of the modern state. New approaches have convincingly demonstrated both how state practices shaped local communities, as well as how those local communities shaped the practices of the state. An important thread running through the arguments of this new historical and anthropological literature is that the state is not a monolithic, all-powerful entity or homogenous and efficient manipulator of subaltern groups, but rather a set of culturally and politically heterogeneous productions: that is to say, states are historical formations that are made socially effective through negotiations and contestation between state and society about state projects and practices.<sup>85</sup> In this very important historical work, middle-class professionals appear as representatives of the state through which local communities and subaltern groups were able to experience and negotiate the heterogeneous political and cultural practices of the state. Although I have been greatly influenced by this recent literature, I would nonetheless argue that these historical approaches have naturalized the very relationship between state rule and the role of professionals. By looking at the Colombian case, I interrogate the process

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<sup>85</sup> Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Susan Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Reworking of the Working Class, 1920-1964* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Javier Zaenz, *Mirar la Infancia*; Mary Kay Vaughan, *Culture Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Thomas Klubock, *Contested Communities*; Karin Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico* (State College: Pennsylvania State University, 2001); Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

through which these professionals became imagined as part of the workings of state rule. By no means do I maintain that these professionals were not representatives of the state. Rather, I want to decipher the historical process through which the Colombian state became classed and gendered as a result of a detailed process of selection/training in the methodologies and practices of rule. In doing so, I think we can de-naturalize the taken-for-granted “vertical encompassment” of the state by examining the hierarchical placement of those professionals who were to work as representatives and governors of state rule and those (non-professionals) who were imagined to be in need of governing.<sup>86</sup>

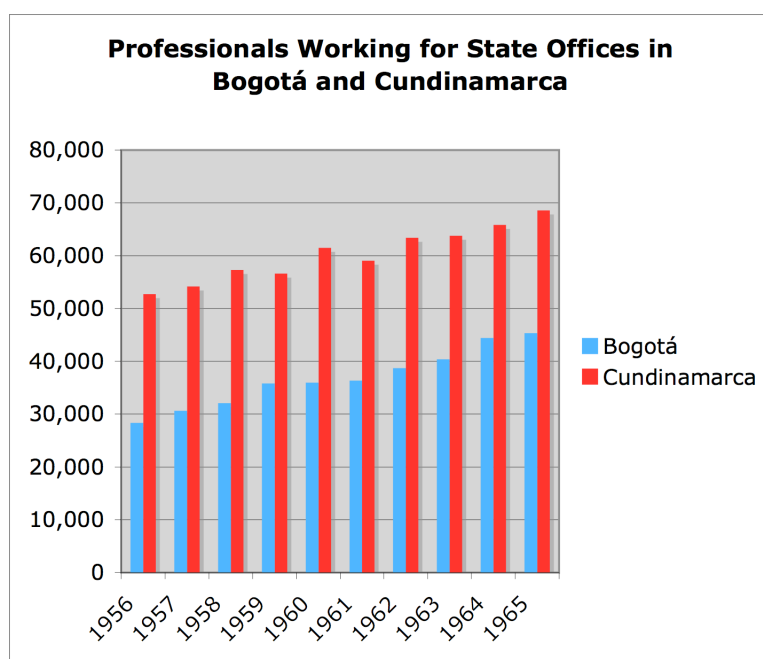


Figure 1 Source: Administrative and Fiscal Statistics (National Department of Statistics), 1956-1965.

<sup>86</sup> Here I am drawing on James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, “Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality,” *American Ethnologist* 29, no. 4 (2002), 981-1002. The point is not, they argue, that the vertical encompassment is false, much less that there is not such thing as political hierarchy, but that it is constructed. The task is not to denounce a false ideology, they continue, but to “draw attention to the social and imaginative processes through which state verticality is made effective and authoritative.” See Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, *The Anthropology of the State. A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

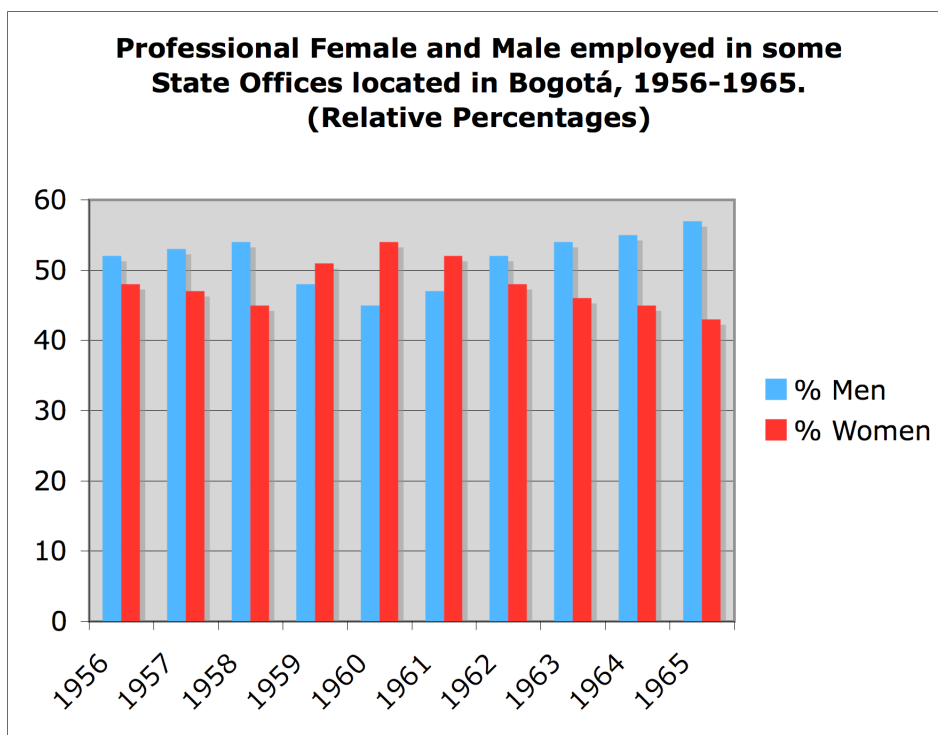


Figure 2 Source: State payrolls, 1956-1965 located at Personnel Offices in Instituto de Crédito Territorial, Caja de Vivenda Popular, Minister of Agriculture, Instituto de Fomento Industrial, Office of Civil Service. On method, see note 87.

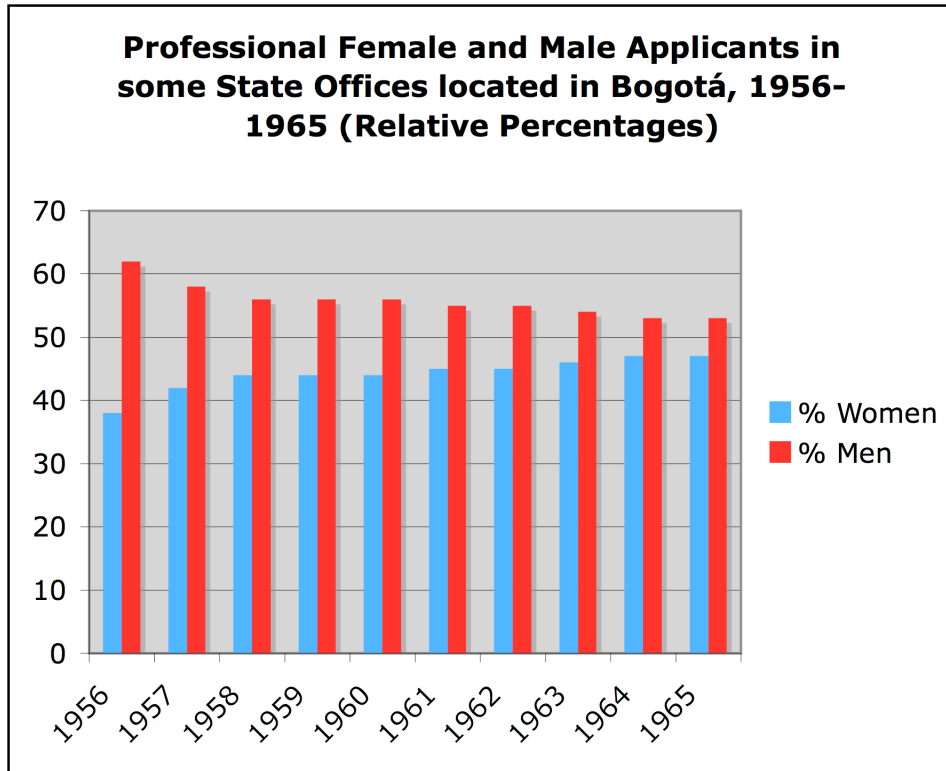


Figure 3 Records of Personnel Offices in Instituto de Crédito Territorial, Caja de Vivienda Popular, Minister of Agriculture, Instituto de Fomento Industrial, Office of Civil Service, 1956-1965.<sup>87</sup>

As shown in figure one, two and three, women and men wanted to work as professionals for the state agencies located in Bogotá and Cundinamarca, with state employees in the department of Cundinamarca approaching 70,000 by 1965. More importantly, during the late 1950s and 1960s, with the consolidation of the National Front and its policies, state offices along with private organizations endeavored to establish what they considered was a more democratic system of rule. This interest in developing a

<sup>87</sup> My sampling methods were quite simple. Given the lack of organization of state archives, I tried to place as many CVs as possible. I entered the data for what I found available and in the end for this dissertation my sample contained over 1,200 CVs. Although it is really difficult to trace the strategies of personnel management and recordkeeping (in fact, most of the CVs and letters of recommendation, evaluations used in this dissertation were about to be destroyed as part of a larger process of privatization of the state—the usual “save some space”), during the period under consideration most of these CVs contained applicant’s sex, age, birthplace, marital status, level of education or literacy. In future work I plan to fully analyze the language and the number statistical work suggest in relationship with the discussion about who is to be selected and trained as governor and who is expected to be governed.



more adequate system of rule was productively engaged with constituting the very subjectivities of those professionals as part of a democratic middle-class working for the state. In the process, I would argue, these putatively abstract discussions of how—and who was—to rule were often precisely what was at stake in middle class professionals' daily lives.

In response to a number of United Nations missions to Colombia during the late 1950s, for instance, the first National Front administration founded the National Civil Service Office in 1958. The main task of this state agency—working closely with major international and national private capital such as FEDECAFE and CARE as well as with the technical support of U.S. universities and the United Nations—was, above all, to put in place a “democratic state for a democratic society.” To do so, it was necessary to implement what was considered an impartial, democratic, rational and scientific system of recruitment, selection and training for those who potentially would be working for the state.<sup>88</sup> In 1959, for example, Seamus Gaffney, director of the United Nations Mission on Public Administration in Colombia, wrote an extensive letter to Bruno Leuschner, director of the Technical Assistance Bureau of the United Nations. According to Gaffney, the future of a democratic state would depend in large measure upon the selection of the

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<sup>88</sup> Recent studies on the National Front criticize these policies as part of a wishful thinking that in reality were bounded to fail. This reflects the tendency of historical analysis to deliver judgments about policymakers' failure to truly implement the social policies they promoted—that is to say, the historical analysis is limited to what we might call the *failure hypothesis*. Such critique is highly conditioned by a tendency to evaluate what is conceived as the policy, on the one hand, versus what are understood as real practices, on the other. In this hypothesis, the National Front policies were, at best, empty rhetoric meant to legitimize the lack of interest on the social concerns of “people.” Thus, all the social policies were failed, precisely because those were never realized in reality. They were, as Mauricio Archila argues, “empty rhetoric with good intentions.” Mauricio Archila, *Idas y venidas. Vueltas y revueltas: Protestas sociales en Colombia, 1958-1990*. (Bogotá: CINEP, 2004) 346-347. Daniel Pécaut, *Crónica de dos décadas de política colombiana 1968-1988* (Bogotá: CEREC, 1989); Jonathan Hartylin, *La política del régimen de coalición. La experiencia del Frente Nacional en Colombia*, (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 1993); Marco Palacios *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

“most valuable members of the society.”<sup>89</sup> Gaffney mentioned repeatedly in the letter that the selection process would have to discover “apolitical professionals”—that is to say professionals who could transcend the political party rivalries that had caused La Violencia, professionals who could place themselves above the Liberal-Conservative divide—with specific qualities, attributes, features, traits and characteristics so they could guide “national human capital...resources and ethos embracing different social groups in society.” Furthermore, it was necessary to identify these “most valuable” middle-class professionals who embodied certain “capabilities, abilities, potentialities, sensibilities, beliefs, sentiments, cultural competences [and] knowledge”—above all “democratic senses, attitudes and wills.”<sup>90</sup> The characteristics and traits necessary to govern the poor as well as the elites were thought to be part of the “nature of the [middle class] bodies” who only needed to be schooled so that a “truly competent [and] capable” professional could “emerge.”

The detailed process of selection taking place in several state institutions and private organizations during the late 1950s and early 1960s—mediated through letters of recommendation, curriculum vitae, interviews, written personal essays, evaluations, exams, tests, questions—speak to the never ending search for the right democratic governor to work for the state. Indeed, the detailed process of selection structured—as much as it was constituted by—the constant need to define who could be *classified* as

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<sup>89</sup> Letter from Seamus Gaffney to Bruno Leuschner, 17 June, 1957, Technical Assistance, mission to Colombia, UNA, TE 322/1col S0175-0310-06.

<sup>90</sup> Rafael Samper and Gabriel Kaplan un plan para la integración del sector público y privado en un programa del desarrollo de la comunidad destinado al mejoramiento socio-económico de las veredas y los barrios de Colombia, 1-7, despacho señor presidente, 1959, comercio exterior, PA. See also Technical conference meeting, December 12, 1960 at the call of the office of Community Development of the minister of government, 1960, fondo: Subgerencia General, serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Instituto de Crédito Territorial Archive, (hereafter ICTAR).

governors and those who could be categorized as governed. Rafael Samper, the director of the Socio-Economic Division at the FEDECAFE who also worked with CARE and the Rockefeller Foundation during the 1950s and 1960s, continually emphasized the need to recognize that, contrary to common wisdom, not all human beings were “cut out for the same type of person, work, obligation or profession.”<sup>91</sup> Indeed, in order to be practical, it was “naïve” to think that the “future professional workers” were “made.” Quite the contrary, he argued, professional workers were “born.” Because these professionals could be found naturally, Simper proposed a careful and meticulously implemented program of recruitment to “discover” those “necessary, indefinable, and indescribable”—and, above all, “intangible”—aptitudes, democratic attitudes, personal interests, wills, feelings, desires, wants, beliefs, and physical traits that the professional needed to manifest when exercising the arts of governance.<sup>92</sup> These selection processes would be sufficiently effective, he claimed, to reveal a clear idea of what Samper suggestively called the *anatomy of qualities*.<sup>93</sup> This anatomy of qualities would hierarchically arrange certain innate democratic dispositions within professional middle class bodies, a constellation of political orientations, gendered distinctions, and class categories that would ensure the

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<sup>91</sup> Rafael Samper and Gabriel Kaplan un plan para la integración del sector público y privado en un programa del desarrollo de la comunidad destinado al mejoramiento socio-económico de las veredas y los barrios de Colombia, 1-7, despacho señor presidente, 1959, comercio exterior, PA.

<sup>92</sup> Rafael Samper and Gabriel Kaplan un plan para la integración del sector público y privado en un programa del desarrollo de la comunidad destinado al mejoramiento socio-económico de las veredas y los barrios de Colombia, 1-7, despacho señor presidente, 1959, comercio exterior, PA. See also, apuntes de entrenamiento, Agosto, 1957, c apuntes de entrenamiento, Folder: adiestramiento y clasificacion, sección: deparatmento de Personal, gabinete del subgerente general, fondo: Subgerencia General, ICTA.

<sup>93</sup> Rafael Samper and Gabriel Kaplan un plan para la integración del sector público y privado en un programa del desarrollo de la comunidad destinado al mejoramiento socio-económico de las veredas y los barrios de Colombia, 1-7, despacho señor presidente, 1959, comercio exterior, PA. See Estudio de entrenamiento y selección de profesionales, Julio 1958, talleres de entrenamiento, clases y asignaturas, CINVAR.

professional in question would be capable of appropriate self-conduct in governing other social groups.<sup>94</sup>

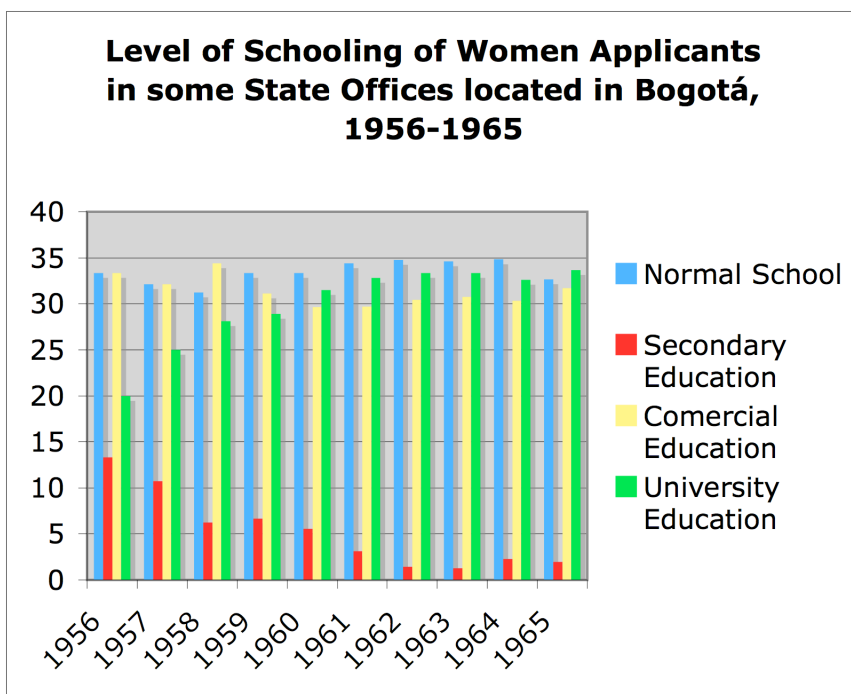
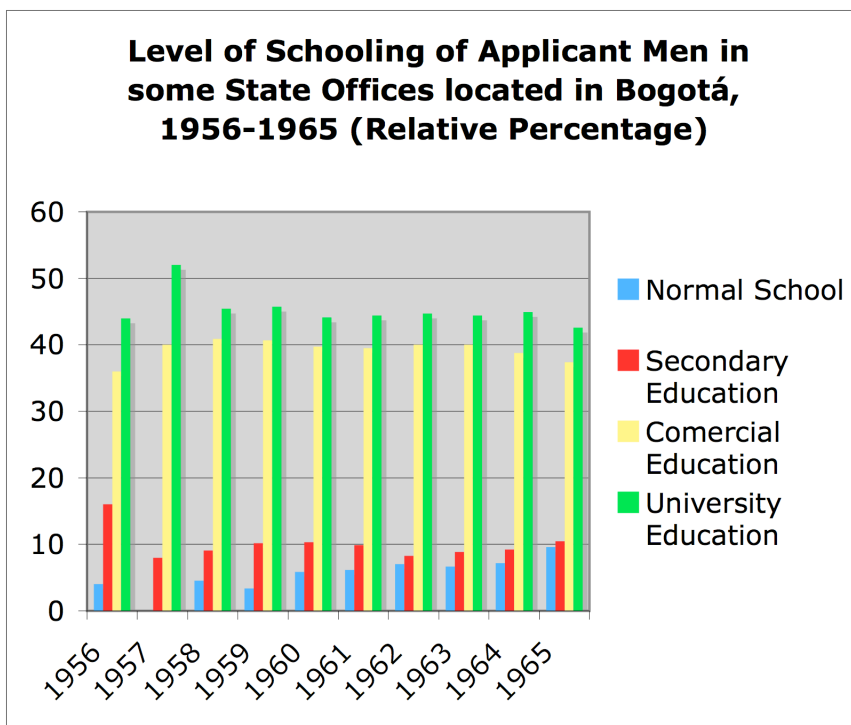
Although assumed to be inherent characteristics, these qualities still needed to be carefully trained, schooled and cultivated—that is, according to Samper, the professional middle class was not only “born” but also “made.” Only then, he argued, would these qualities truly become an essential part of the “[professional’s] habitual nature.”<sup>95</sup> The training would make these natural inner gifts, talents, qualities, “extraordinary capabilities” dispositions, traits, “naturally” self-developable characteristics for the professional to embody. In doing so, those self-developable characteristics would create “truly middle class professionals, incomparable agents of change, and distinguished social catalysts of transformation.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> For some authors these preoccupations for the *anatomy of qualities* simply represent an understanding of democracy as “therapeutic imperative.” Democracy, the argument goes, was only understood from psychological dimension. In contrast, I argue that these processes were crucial part of how democratic sentiments could be constituted. Otherwise, I would content, we miss the very relationship between technique, modern knowledge, and the building of democracy as a process of government. See Aylosah Goldstein, “The Attribute of Sovereignty,” in Sandhya Shkla and Heidi Tinnsman, ed., *Imagining Our Americas*, 326.

<sup>95</sup> Material de talleres de adiestramiento (1957-1959), sección: departamento de personal, serie: gabinete del subgerente general, fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA; See also, Políticas de contratación de personal, 1957-1961, sección de personal, Division de Extensieon Rural, Proyecto Colombia IV and XXV, Ministerio de Agriculture, STACA.

<sup>96</sup> Material de talleres de adiestramiento (1957-1959), sección: departamento de personal, serie: gabinete del subgerente general, fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA. See also, notas de clasificación y talleres para profesionales (1957-1959), sección: departamento de personal, serie: gabinete del subgerente general, fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA. The process of training and guidance is beyond the scope of this article. In here, I focus mainly in the process of *selection*.



Figures 4 and 5 Source: Records of Personnel Offices in Instituto de Crédito Territorial, Caja de Vivinda Popular, Minister of Agriculture, Instituto de Fomento Industrial, Office of Civil Service, 1956-1965. On method see note 87.

To obtain a preliminary view of the professional candidate, it was necessary to look carefully at the curriculum vitae as well as the letters of recommendation.<sup>97</sup> CVs were read as a way to find out the level of schooling or literacy. In fact, in most of these CVs state office personnel in different agencies highlighted the type of education as a first requirement to be considered as a candidate to work for the state. Interestingly, as it is shown in figure four and five, most of the candidates had to have at least secondary education.<sup>98</sup> For applicant women, however, it was required that they had schooling beyond secondary education in order to be considered for the job whereas for male candidates, it seems, they could compete for the job with only some secondary education. Regardless, and as a part of larger process, state offices, it seems, demanded that in order to work for the state it was necessary to pursue studies beyond the secondary education.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> In most of the cases, there were red marks highlighting the level of schooling on the CVs. This suggests that it was crucial for state office of personnel to see the level of education. As I will argue below, this assumption worked closely with the rest of the detailed process of selection.

<sup>98</sup> Although it is very difficult to trace whether some applications were rejected for the level of schooling, it is clear state offices privileged women with professional preparation beyond secondary education.

<sup>99</sup> With the growth of private and public institutions (universities and what it was called Institutos Superiores), enrollment in higher education increased 309% during the 1950s and early 1960s. By the late 1950s, Colombians in general were flocking to several institutions of higher education. By 1964, 84 % of all school children were in class. And illiteracy began to decline, falling behind during the 1950s and to 27% during the 1960s. James Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 342; See Aline Helg, *La Educación en Colombia: Una Historia Social, Económica y Política, 1918-1957* (Bogotá: CEREC, 1986). Fernán González *Educación y Estado*, 110-111. Those nurses, social workers, architects, agronomists, rural specialists, accountants and other professionals who applied for a job to work for the state were coming from the following institutions: Escuela Nacional de Contaduría, Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca, Instituto Gran Colombiano, Escuela de Enfermería de la Cruz Roja (Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario), Instituto Nacional Pedagógico, Escuela Nacional de Comercio, Normal Sor Josefa del Castillo (Chiquinquirá), Fundación Universidad de América, Indesco, Fundación Universitaria de Bogotá “Jorge Tadeo Lozano,” Universidad la Gran Colombia, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Escuela Superior de Orientación Rural (Usaquén), Normal Femenina, Escuela Normal Superior Industrial de Zipaquirá. As I will explain in the last chapter, this produced not only a process of professionalization but also a class struggle for the ownership of the national intellect.

These CVs representing the formal education of the candidates, however, were not read in isolation. Quite the contrary, they were used as evidence and proof to be read along—and against—those needed qualities of the individual who would work as a professional in a range of state social programs. More specifically, the letters of recommendation, usually written by those considered prestigious members of society, narrated personal properties, habits and attributes the professional should possess and were imagined as necessary to work for the state. Letters of recommendation were carefully read to find evidence of professional productivity, composure, intelligence, trustworthiness and reserve. At the same time, those letters were expected to speak of the professional's passion for the “welfare of society.”<sup>100</sup> Candidates needed to possess a natural tendency for constant human interaction with all social classes. Armed with a careful balance between idealism and realism—that is, an equilibrium between the belief in progress and the knowledge of the “limitations of reality”—these professional men were ready to exercise their “obligations and duties with the society at large.” Confident, passionate, and responsible for resolving social problems, these men would be able to create lasting relations with the poor. Indeed, the poor themselves would be able to appreciate those personal attributes when “getting close to them.”<sup>101</sup> And yet, precisely because these men were uniquely aware of their role in society, they could

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<sup>100</sup> Selección de personal/cartas de recomendación (f43) 1956-1959, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>101</sup> Selección de personal/cartas de recomendación (f43) 1956-1959, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA. See also, Selección de personal, cartas de recomendación, 1956, ICTA-Instituto Nacional de Fomento Municipal

simultaneously be humble about their “intelligence, culture, education, feelings and professional preparation.”<sup>102</sup>

A comparison of two letters of recommendation clearly illustrates the hierarchical evaluation of dispositions, the unequal indexing of properties and the asymmetrical fragmentation of attributes thought of as necessary in order to work as middle-class professionals. In a 1956 letter written by an influential member of the Bogotá society to the personnel office of the Instituto de Crédito Territorial on behalf Manuel Mora, Jaime Sánchez narrated how Mora, a “hard worker,” would fit nicely into a professional position.<sup>103</sup> Sánchez argued that not only was Mora a very intelligent, cultured and educated young man but also, and according to Sánchez more importantly, he had the disposition to “learn from others.”<sup>104</sup> This attribute, Sánchez remarked, was not easy “to find in every other professional.”<sup>105</sup> The hiring report from the office of personnel at the ICT expressed excitement at the possibility of contracting somebody like Manuel Mora.<sup>106</sup> Compared to the “common professionals [*profesionales del común*],” the hiring report argued, Mora was different, since he was intelligent as well as strong-minded

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<sup>102</sup> Selección de personal/cartas de recomendación (f25) 1956- 1958, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>103</sup> Selección de personal/cartas de recomendación, contenido: cartas de recomendación y evaluación de Manuel Mora. (f43) 1956-1958, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>104</sup> Selección de personal/cartas de recomendación, contenido: cartas de recomendación y evaluación de Manuel Mora. (f43) 1956-1958, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Sondo: subgerencia general, ICTA. In the letter, the paragraph appears accompanied by an exclamation mark written by hand. I assume the office of personnel did this.

<sup>105</sup> Selección de personal/cartas de recomendación, contenido: cartas de recomendación y evaluación de Manuel Mora. (f43) 1956-1958, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Sondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>106</sup> Informes de selección de personal, reportes y evaluaciones de procesos de selección de personal profesional, evaluación de solicitud de trabajo de Manuel Mora 1956-1958 (f73) 1956-1958, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: Subgerencia general, ICTA.



[*dispuesto*] and in a constant process of self-education by interacting with others. Mora was a man who was “intelligent enough” to recognize the partiality and the limitations of his knowledge. These limitations and partialities, however, would be surpassed by his eagerness to learn.<sup>107</sup> And precisely because of this disposition, Manuel Mora could develop the quality, under proper training and education, of believing that “no one completely lacks intelligence.”<sup>108</sup> The possibility of instilling this attribute was significant, the hiring report argued, because it would eventually be valuable when Manual Mora came in contact with “poor people who [were] not remotely as intelligent as [he was].”<sup>109</sup>

We see an illuminating contrast in the letter submitted in 1955 by Alfonso Guevara, the director of the office of social programs in a municipal company, in behalf of Miguel Pérez, applicant for a position at the ICT. According to Guevara, Pérez was an outstanding professional who possessed innumerable personal qualities. Like Manual Mora, this applicant was confident and a conscious man. He was a well-educated individual ready to work “for a better society.”<sup>110</sup> Indeed, Pérez was very aware of his “unparalleled [*inigualables*] qualities,” was convinced of his “incomparable knowledge,” and “unmatched intelligence.”<sup>111</sup> Alfredo Guevara, who wrote the letter of

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<sup>107</sup> Informes de selección de personal, reportes y evaluaciones de procesos de selección de personal profesional, evaluación de solicitud de trabajo de Manuel Mora 1956-1958 (f73) 1956-1958, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: Subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid..

<sup>110</sup> Informes de selección de personal, contenido: reportes y evaluaciones de procesos de selección de personal profesional, evaluación de solicitud de trabajo de Miguel Pérez 1955-1957 (f43) 1956-1958, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

recommendation, argued that Pérez could also be very productive even if the “environment around [him]” might not be very favorable. He was a committed man who would be able to focus on his professional obligations, and if necessary, get the work done all by himself.<sup>112</sup> Contrary to what Guevara expected, the report issued by the office of personnel argued that, despite outstanding qualities and attributes, the letter of recommendation revealed the “lack [of] essential” traits to work as a professional. The problem was, it seems, that Pérez came across as lacking the “modest nature” such “prestigious... professionals” needed to possess.<sup>113</sup> The evaluation argued, furthermore, that the letter of recommendation gave the impression that Pérez was a “*profesional del montón*”—those who, because they had formal education, “think they know everything.”<sup>114</sup> It was an evident problem, the report elaborated further, precisely because Pérez would have a clear tendency to assume that he had “nothing to learn from anybody else.”<sup>115</sup> This tendency would have not posed a problem if, the report claimed, Pérez were to work with “people like [himself].”<sup>116</sup> For the particular position in question, however, it was a liability because he was expected to be in close contact with poor people who would lack “any intellectual [or] cultural preparation,” and their “intellectual differences” would be “too evident” when he came “face to face [with] poor people.”<sup>117</sup> In this vein, state personnel offices and similar hiring venues produced statements, evaluations and

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

reports encouraging and celebrating those who were categorized as “gifted men” and were willing to take risks in life to “change things,” prestigious professionals eager to sacrifice “any privilege [they] might have” to be in “genuine engagement” with the “society around [them].” Indeed, as true men, they should embody “unbreakable integrity” and “clear moral judgment”<sup>118</sup>

The letter of recommendation was also mined for evidence of the social background of the candidates. It was necessary; it seems, to be generally aware of “social origins and background” that the potential professionals *came from*.<sup>119</sup> This social background, furthermore, was constantly associated with—or evaluated against—“necessary virtues [and] incomparable traits” that professionals would need when exercising and performing the arts of government for the Colombian state. In 1956, for instance, Alfonso Ortiz wrote a letter of recommendation in behalf of Juan Granados to work as a professional in the joint housing project between the Popular Housing Fund (Caja de Vivienda Popular) and the ICT.<sup>120</sup> Granados, noted Ortiz, was an admirable example of achievement and advancement.<sup>121</sup> Under very difficult social constraints, Ortiz explained, Granados overcame his social background and had been able to acquire an education in order to “be

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<sup>118</sup> Informes y evaluaciones de procesos de selección de personal profesional y solicitudes de trabajo (f125) 1956-1958; (1955-1957), Folder: cartas y reportes de personal, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>119</sup> Informes de personal, evaluación y sugerencias (f111) 1954-1959, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>120</sup> Evaluación de solicitud de trabajo de Juan Grandos, 1956 (f48) 1955-1957, Folder: reportes de selección de personal, informes y evaluaciones de procesos de selección de personal profesional, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA. In the letter of recommendation does not specify who Alfonso Ortiz was. Presumably, Ortiz held a high position at the *Banco de la República*.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

somebody in life.”<sup>122</sup> If only for that, argued Ortiz in the letter of recommendation, Granados could be a fine example a prestigious professional man who possessed “perseverance, humility, awareness of life [and] concern for social problems.”<sup>123</sup>

The evaluation of this recommendation, however, explicitly explained the association of the so-called social background and the qualities, sentiments and attachments professionals should embody and enact. The evaluation issued by the office of personnel at the Popular Housing Fund initially responded positively to Ortiz’s recommendation on behalf of Granados. There was no doubt, stated the report, that Granados would be an excellent professional who would show perseverance, confidence, determination and enthusiasm when working with his professional colleagues in different “social aspects” of the housing programs being implemented in Bogotá during the 1950s.<sup>124</sup> At the same time, however, the evaluation stated that Granados’s social background could potentially become a problem given the *type* of work he would perform.<sup>125</sup> Since Granados would work “in an environment of poverty,” his social background could “conflict” with—indeed it could be an “obstacle” for—his achievements as a “prestigious professional.” Precisely because he *came from* the same social environment, it was virtually assumed that he would have trouble doing his job. Although the difference in social origins, it was argued, might not be noticeable among his professional colleagues, it was suspected that

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. See also cartas de recomendación evaluaciones y sugerencias (f11) (1956-1958), Folder: Selección de personal/cartas de recomendación, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>125</sup> Cartas de recomendación y evaluaciones de trabajo de Juan Granados (1956-1951) (f58) Folder: selección de personal/cartas de recomendación, 8, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

when working with poor people he might lack the “necessary distance and objectivity.” According to the report, an extraordinary characteristic for the professional was to embody “[a] capacity to tell the truth about themselves and the others around them.”<sup>126</sup> And in order to do so, the professional should “show strong attachment toward the poor.” Granados’ social background, however, would make him too close to “the people themselves,” and thus he might not differentiate—that is, “tell the truth”—about what he has become and about his former class collective self. He could not, furthermore, develop a “strong social attachment” to—and, more specifically, a bond toward—the poor precisely because his social constraints had shaped him as necessarily *belonging* to “the poor.” Neither too close to belong to the poor, nor too distant to be detached toward them, the professional was expected to embody a balance, a disposition to “objectivity,” as well as a hierarchical “sentiment of closeness” so they could dedicate themselves to speaking, again, “the truth about themselves and *others* around them.”<sup>127</sup> That is to say, in order to rule it was necessary to calibrate not only social distinctions/differentiations but also establish hierarchical and perhaps even fragmentary bonds between those who were supposed to be guided to rule and those who were supposed to be governed.

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<sup>126</sup> Cartas de recomendación y evaluaciones de trabajo de Juan Granados (1956-1951) (f58) Folder: selección de personal/cartas de recomendación, 8, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. In Spanish the quotation reads: “decir la verdad sobre ellos mismos y las personas a su alrededor.”

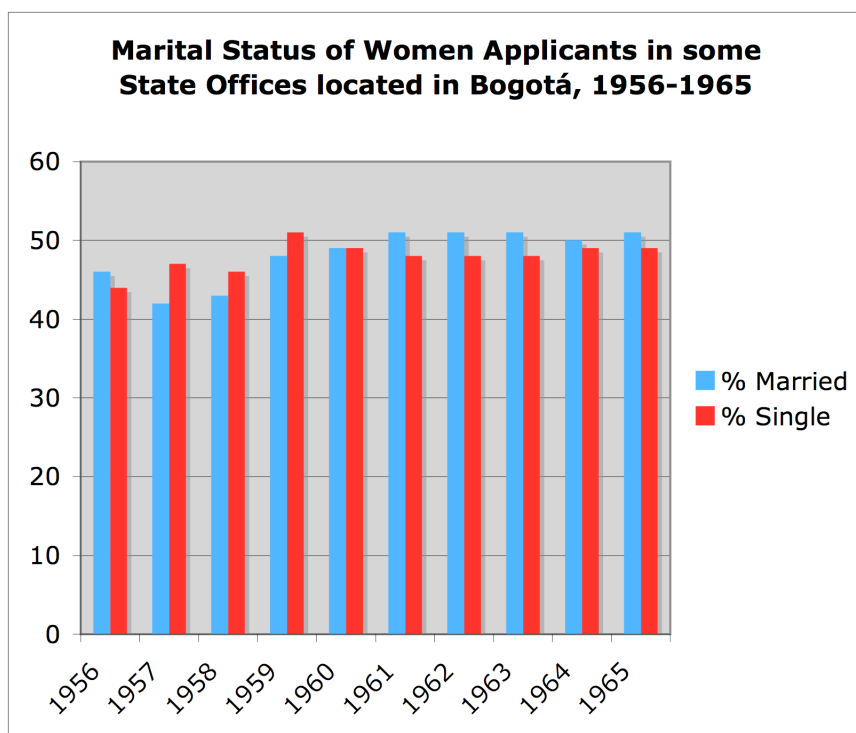
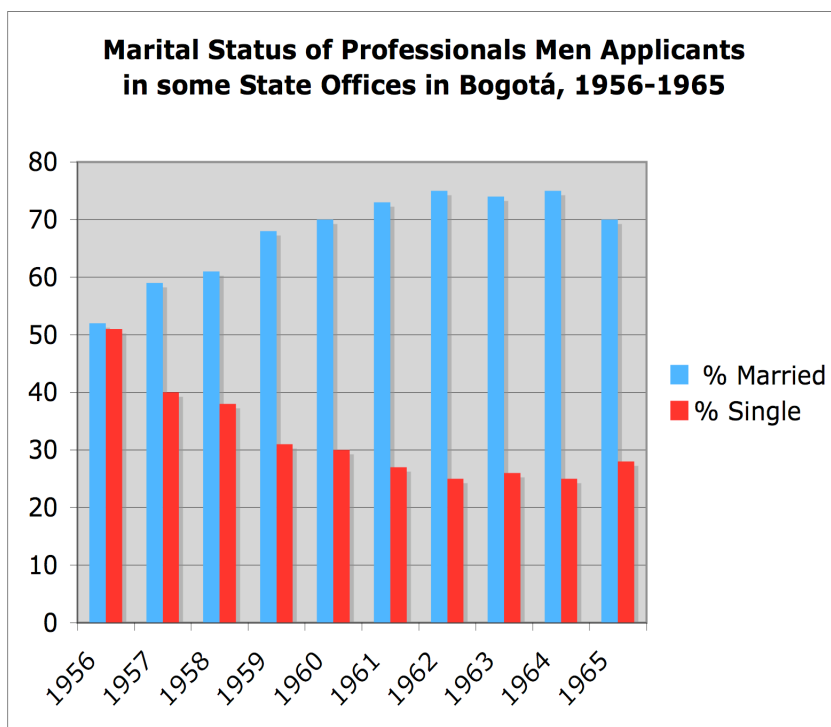


Figure 6 and 7 Records of Personnel Offices in Instituto de Crédito Territorial, Caja de Vivinda Popular, Minister of Agriculture, Instituto de Fomento Industrial, Office of Civil Service, 1956-1965. On method see note 87.

As it is shown in figure 6 and figure 7 state agencies along with private organizations were looking for (married) *men* in the belief that they would be “politically quiet” when working for the state. Married men, it was argued, would, on the one hand, avoid “improper” politics since it was family what worried them the most, and on the other, be more responsible when working for the state, since they could set up an example for to those peasants and workers who did not yet know how to be “true fathers.” More importantly, these men could own a power of decision, inner determination—professional men who were “strong enough” to contribute to the resolution of Colombia’s social problems. Indeed, letters of recommendation and evaluations regarded these powers as an integral part of the masculine task of governing. A “true man” would neither be “weak”—like “the man from a poor social background”—nor “arrogant” like “elitist men” who were driven only by appearances and professional status. As stated in a hiring report that echoed many such letters and personnel evaluations from the 1950s and early 1960s,

[A Middle class professional] does not live by appearances. He is elegant, humble, *sencillo*, neat and attractive. He spreads healthiness to those who are around him...He is not from a bad class[mala clase]. ...He is of middle class background, he does not fear change...he possesses intellectual equilibrium...[a] personal touch and people skills [*don de gentes*]. With a constructive attitude toward his professional tasks... he knows what it means to work hard and personify an infinite patience to understand social problems.

And the hiring report stated,

[This letter] allows us to see an honest, tolerant, patient, understanding man [who] reflects good manners, good oral expression, a man with character, will and decisiveness... with a sense of progress who does not lack professional status...he knows how to overcome social obstacles. He has a spirit of dedication... spirit of sacrifice, spirit of infinite patience. He is not driven by social appearances. He is well-educated. He has reached an emotional and intellectual equilibrium as well as maturity. He has a touch of humanity. A constructive attitude and possesses the qualities of humility and always pursues a mission in life with discretion,

honorability, decency high emotional standards... internal comportment... integrity... reason... moral virtues, harmonious dispositions, intelligence, strong sense of self-denial, diligence, temperance, self-control, calm, generosity, humanity reserve, maturity in judgment, good sentiments and trustworthiness.<sup>128</sup>

And yet, after discussing, evaluating and pondering the letters of recommendation, different selection committees in state offices, transnational private organizations and various training institutions worked together to argue that these narratives were too superficial and did not allow them to develop a more “elaborated concept” of the middle class professional. Moreover, it was said, these letters merely offered a narrow window on who was a “truly democratic professional.”<sup>129</sup> During the late 1950s and 1960s, and informed by discourses and political knowledge on social psychology, cultural anthropology, rural sociology, human relations and scientific management, these institutions began elaborating entrance exams, job orientations, evaluations, interviews, hiring reports and training sessions to carefully discover—and guide—what was understood as the “professional’s second nature and habits.”<sup>130</sup>

Interviews were thought to make it possible to go further into the discovery of the *anatomy of qualities* of democratic middle class “governors.” By working with four interlocking narrative forms—questions about social background, cultural descriptions,

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<sup>128</sup> Cartas de recomendación e informes de evaluación de Luis Torres (f56) 1955-1958, comites de selección de personal, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>129</sup> Comité de selección de personal/ solicitudes y respuestas, 1957-1959, Sección: políticas de personal y adiestramiento, 1958-1960, sección: departamento de personal, serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA; See also Actas, fondo secretaria general, ICTA; CINVAR, talleres y selección de profesionales, November 1955 and Julio 1958, talleres y selección de profesionales, talleres de entrenamiento, clases and asignaturas, CINVAR.

<sup>130</sup> Comité de selección de personal/ solicitudes y respuestas, 1957-1959, Sección: políticas de personal y adiestramiento, 1958-1960, sección: departamento de personal, serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA



family biographical anecdotes, and accounts of personal advancement—the interviews sought to elicit a very clear perspective on the context in which the professional candidate had been immersed and had developed. It was imperative to discern the “social view of the individual”—that is, the complex combination of values, desires, beliefs, sensibilities, convictions, aspirations, preoccupations, interests and, all the factors that go into the essential “social composition [and] makeup of the professional.”<sup>131</sup> In a word, it was necessary to discover what was called the “human ecology of the professional.”<sup>132</sup>

In 1955, Ruben Forero, along with several others who were applying for jobs as professionals in state offices or private companies, was interviewed to work as an architect in the ICT’s housing projects. The report issued by the committee and the office of personnel a few weeks after he was interviewed argued that Ruben’s responses, among other things, had “faithfully” shown his “commitment as a true professional man.”<sup>133</sup> By closely connecting his self-evident “middle class background [*antecedents de clase media*] ...outstanding family biography...exceptional cultural environment and noticeable personal achievement,” the evaluation report asserted that these factors and conditions reflected how Ruben Forero had the innate capacity to develop the skills to work with different social groups and embody “democratic attitudes” when creating “close relationships with the poor.” Forero’s father, said the report, was an accountant

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<sup>131</sup> Políticas de personal y adiestramiento, 1958-1960, Serie: actas, folder: Fondo: secretaría general, ICTA. See also Políticas de personal. (f54) 1956-1958, serie: gabinete de sub-gerente general, fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA

<sup>132</sup> Políticas de personal y adiestramiento, 1958-1960, Serie: actas, folder: fondo: secretaría general, ICTA.

<sup>133</sup> Informes de personal, (f23) (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: secretaría general, ICTA.

while his mother was a housewife.<sup>134</sup> His parents had been married for many years, and their marriage was, said the report of the interview, “ideal and harmonious.”<sup>135</sup> This meant, the report argued, that Forero had grown up in a family environment that valued sincerity, dialogue, calm, self-control and honesty.<sup>136</sup>

More importantly, his gendered family biography had immersed—and shaped—him in a social context and cultural environment that was concerned with “service, knowledge, education, and cultural development.”<sup>137</sup> Specifically, the report of the interview argued that Forero amply appreciated the privilege of having a stay-at-home mother. Because of this condition, it was concluded, Forero had developed a “democratic sense of himself.” That is, he had been able to learn “to be sensitive” toward social problems, to be concerned for the complicated situations of others, and to look beyond his own personal interests. Indeed, his mother had “transmitted ... a legacy in service [*legado en servicio*].”<sup>138</sup> Forero could consequently embody this “democratic sense,” “feeling of freedom,” and “legacy in service” because his mother had always created an “integrated family environment... a sentiment of sacrifice and unselfishness service” that

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<sup>134</sup> Informes de personal, (f23) (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: secretaría general, ICTA. See also, informes de personal contratado, (1955-1957), sección: departamento de personal, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>135</sup> Informes de personal, (f23) (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: secretaría general, ICTA. See also, evaluaciones de personal activo, (1955-1957), sección: departamento de personal, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA; see also, Políticas de contratación, (1958-1961), sección de personal, División de extension Rural, Colombia IV y Colombia XXV, Convenio-Colombiano Americano de Agricultura, Ministerio de Agricultura, STACA.

<sup>136</sup> Informes de personal, (f23) (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: secretaría general, ICTA.

<sup>137</sup> Informes de personal, (f23) (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: secretaría general, ICTA.

<sup>138</sup> Informes de personal, (f23) (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: secretaría general, ICTA.

had put no social constraints on the development of Forero's brighter future. Above all, Forero's mother had set an incomparable example of "service" by making anonymous sacrifices: in doing so, his mother had passed on to him an "inborn interest" in helping others.<sup>139</sup>

Conversely, Forero's father had taught him "the important things in life" and had been an example of "professionalism, personal commitment in life, perseverance and cultural improvement." Indeed, his father had passed on to Forero a concern for the problems of society, as well as an interest in education and knowledge. This interest, argued the report, had been the most valuable legacy for Forero since he was shaped to believe that education and knowledge could be found *within* himself.<sup>140</sup>

During the late 1950s and 1960s, state agencies and private capital organization assumed that what the professional could be and do was the result of their "cultural immersion" in a hierarchically understood social background and/or cultural environments, with particular family biographies and personal development. By essentially indexing, categorizing and *classifying* these social backgrounds in gender, and class terms, these agencies tried to constitute democratic middle class professionals to work for the state. When women applied for jobs, especially as social workers, for instance, the interview was equally concerned with the "social influences [and] the social milieu" to which women had been exposed. In 1958, for example, Celmira Burgos, a recent graduate of the School of Social Work, was being interviewed for an ICT

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<sup>139</sup> Informes de personal, (f23) (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: secretaría general, ICTA.

<sup>140</sup> Informes de personal, (f23) (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: secretaría general, ICTA.

community development program being carried out in a Bogotá neighborhood called Quiroga. The report of this interview elaborated extensively on how Burgo's family biography, social background, cultural descriptions and personal development gave the impression that she had grown up "within a proper social environment."<sup>141</sup> The family was considered as coming from a middle class background: the family life was composed of professional parents and student siblings. In contrast to the evaluation of Rubén Forero's interview, which discussed both parents, Celmira's interview focused mainly on her mother's role. Celmira's mother, Amparo, had been working as a secretary in a private firm, and the report disclosed how Celmira had been influenced by these social conditions. Celmira had been immersed in a context of family support and had been educated in the "necessities and sacrifices." Amparo had taught Celmira the "most important things" as a woman. Indeed, the report contended that Celmira was very aware of the "feminine tasks." Contrary to someone "driven by interest" to work in order to achieve "material satisfaction," Celmira had been inculcated to view work as a means to find a "larger social meaning." Furthermore, Celmira was coming from a balanced environment that allowed her to develop a "sentiment" to help others. For her—and this was assumed to be a consequence of her social background and family biography—to work meant to resonate with the suffering of others, to be concerned with the misery of the poor, to promote the welfare of the people.<sup>142</sup> This "larger meaning" would help

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<sup>141</sup> Informes de personal y evaluaciones de personal activo (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA; See also, Comité de personal/Celmira Burgos, (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA; Actas de proyecto Barrio Quiroga, (1955-1958), Sección: secretaria general, Serie: gabinete de gerencia general, Fondo: Gerencia General; And Material de entrenamiento para el personal del Instituto de Crédito Territorial, (1957-1959), Notas de clase, asignatura y entrenamiento, CINVAR.

<sup>142</sup> Informes de personal y evaluaciones de personal activo, (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA; Comité de

Celmira to engage with the poor, deliver trustworthiness to them, understand the social situation of those “unprivileged women” and, no less important, to instill in others the desire to “improve themselves.”<sup>143</sup>

Although there are comparatively few reports or evaluations on those who were rejected, there are elaborations on the reasons why certain professional candidates could present some difficulties in working as professionals. Unlike Ruben Forero or Celmira Burgos, for example, the reports and evaluations of less successful interviews argued that the candidate’s family environment was characterized by a tendency to have “numerous members, consensual unions, violence, disharmony, [and] disintegration.”<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, troubled families with complicated social backgrounds and serious “social constraints,” several reports argued, translated into cultural environments devoid of proper parenting—with single mothers, at best, and in some cases lacking parental guidance entirely. These families had been influenced by cultural conditions in which “abandonment of women and children by men was normal routine.” On the one hand, these “wrong cultural conditions” and social constraints would inherently shape women into those with “few feminine tendencies,” no interest other than “material satisfaction,” no “maternal sentiment” to help others, and a “strong self-interest” to remain in the “poor social position” where they “found themselves.” On the other hand, these same cultural

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personal/Celmira Burgos, (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>143</sup> Informes de personal y evaluaciones de personal activo, (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA; See also, Informe de práctica del Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca, Instituto de Crédito Territorial, Barrio Quiroguá, (1957), Sección: Actas Rectoría, Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca Archive (Hereafter CMCA); Ubicación laboral de las recién egresadas, (1958), Informes anuales, Sección: rectoría, CMCA.

<sup>144</sup> Comité de Personal (f67) 1954-1957, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general ICTA, Fondo: su-b-gerencia general, ICTA.

conditions would form innately “weak men” who were hostile, weak willed, unmotivated, aggressive and insecure and who expressed “contempt and rejection toward others” as well as “hateful and pessimistic sentiments [about] life.”<sup>145</sup>

We can compare the evaluations of two interviews in 1959 that, although brief, explained how problematic two male candidates could be as potential middle class democratic governors. According to the report of the ICT office of personnel, Roberto Bonilla’s interview began with no “good signs.” He was, the report recounted, poorly dressed—Bonilla was not attired in a suit, did not have a tie, showed up at the interview unshaven, and, overall, his presentation “left much to be desired about who he really [was].” These problems clearly reflected his lack of motivation to work as a “true professional.”<sup>146</sup> These first impressions, furthermore, were corroborated by an evaluation of Bonilla’s cultural environment, social background and family biography. There was an association between the “poor social background” from which Bonilla came, the cultural environment in which he had been “immersed,” and the effects of these previous conditions and social constraints on his family. Bonilla grew up in a context of no “proper fathering.”<sup>147</sup> Bonilla’s father had abandoned his mother and his two siblings several years prior, and the applicant had grown up without paternal guidance. Bonilla

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<sup>145</sup> Comité de Personal (f67) 1954-1957, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general ICTAR, Fondo: su-b-gerencia general, ICTA. See also, Comites de evaluación de personal, (f67) (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del subgerente general, Fondo: sub-gerencia general. The ICTA also has several evaluations and letters from the Caja de Vivienda popular. See Evaluaciones y solicitudes de personal, (1955-1961), Fondo Caja de Vivienda Popular, ICTA.

<sup>146</sup> Informes de solicitudes de trabajo/ Roberto Bonilla, (1957-1959), Comité de selección y evaluación de personal, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>147</sup> Informes de solicitudes de trabajo/ Roberto Bonilla, (1957-1959), Comité de selección y evaluación de personal, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA; Evaluación de solicitudes de trabajo, (1955-1957), Sección: departamento de personal, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

thus did not become tutored in the “masculine aspirations” for knowledge, culture and education. The lack of proper fathering, furthermore, had some real effects on Bonilla’s inner self; like others who were categorized as “people from a bad class [*personas de mala clase*],” he could not develop or possess either the masculine spirit of competition or the capacity to take risks to improve who he was. And if this was not enough for Bonilla, said the evaluation, his mother Beatriz also failed to set a good example for him and his siblings precisely because she had “always been of the same social background.” There was nothing to emulate/aspire to, nothing to be educated in.<sup>148</sup> In all, it was his gendered cultural environment and social background, and more importantly, the inherent characteristics of the Bonilla’s family biography that produced a “weak man...afraid of change... with no aspirations for education [or] knowledge... no desire to better himself.” In other words, the evaluation tersely argued, it was “difficult to see” Bonilla working for the state as a true professional man.<sup>149</sup> As a report by the office of rural extension of the Minister of Agriculture concluded in 1960,

What can we expect of these men who are the result of this troubled social background and difficult cultural environment? Needless to say, these would be aggressive professionals. Aggressive because when they see the same problems they have lived, they would react negatively. They would become hostile toward others, socially resentful ...they would be angry at society because of their situation. What model can these professionals give to others if in their social development they have received none? They have been raised in a social and cultural environment where single motherhood [*madre soldetirismo*], parental irresponsibility and family disintegration

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<sup>148</sup> Informes de solicitudes de trabajo/ Roberto Bonilla, (1957-1959), Comité de selección y evaluación de personal, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>149</sup> Informes de solicitudes de trabajo/ Roberto Bonilla, (1957-1959), Comité de selección y evaluación de personal, Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA. See also, Solicitudes de trabajo, (1957-1959), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

may seem normal. In them, it is impossible to find the security, the model, the motivation, the energy, the attitudes those working and peasant classes really need.<sup>150</sup>

Gabriel Colmenares, a lawyer who gave an interview for a job as a professional in social programs in the ICT in 1959, provides an interesting contrast. The report argued that his privileged social background and complicated family biography had affected who he was. Coming *from* a social background of “extensive economic means,” the report noted, Gabriel had not had any experience with the real problems of life. The cultural environment in which he had been “immersed” had produced a “weak man” who only manifested “improper aspirations” because he was not inclined to form attachments toward the poor, and instead, would be satisfied merely with his own “professional status.”<sup>151</sup> Since he had not had to struggle in life, social problems were neither in his mind nor in his interests. More importantly, he was not conscious of the poverty of Colombia—he did not possess a cultivated awareness about the role a professional could play in helping people to help themselves. Since he was from “old money [*La plata bajo la almohada*]” no personal development had taken place, only a preoccupation with self-interested knowledge.<sup>152</sup> He had, it was argued, everything in life. Given this privileged family biography, the report of the interview asked, how would he be able to face the social problems and “rough social situations” when working closely with the poor?

Predictably, the report argued, his social atmosphere, cultural environment, and the

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<sup>150</sup> Políticas de contratación, (1958-1961), Sección de Personal, División de Extension Rural, Colombia IV y Colombia XXV, Convenio-Colombiano Americano de Agricultura, Ministerio de Agricultura, STACA.

<sup>151</sup> Comité de selección y evaluación de personal, reportes de solicitudes de trabajo/Gabriel Colmenares, (1957-1959), sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>152</sup> Comité de selección y evaluación de personal, reportes de solicitudes de trabajo/Gabriel Colmenares, (1957-1959), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.



family biography had specific effects *within* Gabriel himself. He was a “weak man” who would easily get scared not only of the reality of life but also, and perhaps more importantly, of the people themselves.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, these cultural and social conditions provoked an innate and “peculiar absence” of feelings, sympathies and attachments toward the poor. As a weak man, he could not “develop” a “quality of adaptability” to different “social [and] cultural contexts.”<sup>154</sup> The report repeatedly warned how, if selected, he would demonstrate to the people his lack of interest by either “look[ing] away”—or “excusing” himself—from the “situation of the poor.” It was inconceivable, the report concluded, that this privileged man with neither experience with the poor nor “appreciation/understanding” for the “problems of society,” could produce any “needed changes” in the “people who suffer the most.”<sup>155</sup>

This meticulous process of evaluation was paramount to the constitution of democratic middle-class professionals and their association to state rule. Those selected would be neither from what was considered a poor social background nor from what was conceived as extensive economics means. The detailed process of selection constantly constituted the middle-class professionals as those who would be able to embody state rule by, on the one hand, calibrating social distinctions/differentiations, and on the other, establishing hierarchical—if fragmentary—bonds between those who were supposed to

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<sup>153</sup> Comité de selección y evaluación de personal, reportes de solicitudes de trabajo/Gabriel Colmenares, (1957-1959), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>154</sup> Comité de selección y evaluación de personal, reportes de solicitudes de trabajo/Gabriel Colmenares, (1957-1959), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

<sup>155</sup> Comité de selección y evaluación de personal, reportes de solicitudes de trabajo/Gabriel Colmenares, (1957-1959), Sección: departamento de personal, Serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, Fondo: subgerencia general, ICTA.

be representative and governors of state rule and those who were supposed to be governed. In the process, there was an eternal need to hierarchically define and classify who could potentially become the best governors to work for the state.

### **Democracy Is You<sup>156</sup>**

Along with this detailed process of selection, these professionals were also subjected to a training regimen on how, as gendered and classed representatives of the state, to exercise the practices of rule. It is difficult to trace the different transnational institutions, state organizations, U.S. offices for foreign assistance and U.S. and Colombian universities involved in this meticulous training of professionals to work as governors. In dire need of creating a professional who could be democratic by transcending the partisan rivalry that had cause La Violencia, a hybrid set of private, public and transnational organizations began, during the late 1950s and 1960s, to train middle-class professionals on how exercise state rule.

United States offices of foreign assistance played quite a role in shaping the training and educational process. Through workshops, classes, conferences, lectures, job orientation sessions, written essays and discussions, U.S. professors and consultants affiliated with the Organization of American States and the United Nations, as well as with private transnational organizations, advised Colombian “experts” on how to cultivate what was perceived as the necessary democratic dispositions and capacities to exercise state rule. The Social Security Institute, the National Confederation of Coffee Growers, the Federal Housing Institute, the Inter-American Center for Housing and

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<sup>156</sup> CINVA. It seems this was an appropriation of the book title, in English, *Democracy Is You*. This book was also produced within the discourse of community development.

Planning, the Institute of Industrial Growth, the National Institute for Agrarian Reform and the different social, political and cultural centers sponsored by the Organization of American States engaged in ongoing dialogue about the urgent need to prepare these professionals to work democratically. As Sam Shulman, a U.S. sociologist affiliated with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation for Agriculture under the auspice of the Alliance for Progress, put it in a 1963 letter to President Guillermo León Valencia,

And these are the professionals usually of a middle-class background who should learn how to approach the peasants...the workers...these are the professionals who should be more sensitive to, given their middle-class background, those who understandably are in a different environment...an educational program is needed if we are to assign the tasks of progress to these professionals who, after all, would have to be in contact with the national laboring classes... these professionals need to overcome those anti-democratic practices that have characterized them in the past...They need to be more open minded to what is different given the different environment where they have grown up...they have to leave political passions and the thirst for professional authority. They need to be [above all] democratic.<sup>157</sup>

These professionals were subjected to an intense process of training to become democratic governors for state rule. Usually, these workshops, lectures, conferences, fieldtrips and classes were required as part of the “job description.” Although it was a subject of constant discussion, national and international experts seem to have privileged certain discourses in schooling these professionals to become democratically engaged with their “national role.” Continuously citing ideas of community development, these experts used stories, examples of real life and field trips to persuade those professionals working for state institutions to understand their “role in a different light, from a different perspective...and with a different approach.” The task was, it

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<sup>157</sup> Letter from Sam Shulman to Guillermo León Valencia, 9 September, 1963, proyecto 206, capacitación y estudios sobre profesionales para las actividades estatales de reforma agraria y de desarrollo comunitario, CIES, Organization of American States Archive, Columbus Library.

seems, to get these professionals to grasp how privileged they were in working for the state, precisely because “not too many people [were] capable of performing a democratic job for the benefit of national development.” In one workshop that took place at ICTA in 1960, Orlando Fals-Borda, a very influential Colombian sociologist trained at the University of Florida during the 1950s, invited some professionals to think for a moment about how important their job was for “the society as a whole.” And yet not all professionals were fit to work for the state precisely because some of them were having a hard time understanding that

the future of the nation depends on the democratic professional of today...engaged with the social problems of the nation... the future of peace in Colombia depends on professionals who care about what happens with those who also live in the nation... The future of Colombian democracy depends on professionals who are willing to use their knowledge and privileges for the advancement of society into progress.<sup>158</sup>

Therefore, professionals needed to assess how they could become truly privileged by performing as democratic professionals. And in order to do so, it seems, national and international experts explained that there were three “types” of professional men. The first was a traditional and autocratic one, who, reproducing a “legacy of the past,” boasted only a “capacity for bossing.”<sup>159</sup> That is to say, this was a professional who performed his job by merely demanding the obedience of the people. Caroline Ware, a very active consultant the Alliance for Progress through the

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<sup>158</sup> Material de entrenamiento, 1960, carpeta: material de entrenamiento, fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, ICTA.

<sup>159</sup> ICTA, fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento, 1955-1957; 1957-1959. See also ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento enviados por la división socio-económica de la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia 1957-1959

Organization of American States who gave several lectures and workshops during the late 1950s and 1960s, gave a talk at the CINVA to an audience of professionals working for several state institutions. Following the typical pattern of the time, Ware narrated stories of imagined yet specific lives of professionals performing their jobs. She particularly appealed to her experience working in Puerto Rico by citing “frustrated cases” where she could easily detect an autocratic professional.<sup>160</sup> This professional, Ware lectured, would not allow the people to express their opinions about social problems they faced in their own communities. It was his obligation, Ware said, to make decisions, assume responsibilities and, above all, know what was good for the people.<sup>161</sup> By acting in an “authoritarian way,” he inevitably ignored and even sought to elide the poor’s interests and conditions. More importantly, this authoritarian professional not only improperly intimidated people to participate in democratic processes but also produced “fears, resistance and rejection” from the people toward progress. And when he faced these rejections, he had no option but to order the people to obey what he had thought their interests should be. He was satisfied with his professional performance, even though people would only follow him as a result of “fear, obedience and submission.”<sup>162</sup>

The consequences of these imagined autocratic professionals, furthermore, were “devastating,” since they could not effectively produce or develop the necessary conditions for the peasants and workers to change. By citing and drawing on examples

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<sup>160</sup>Apuntes de clase, conferencias, asignaturas. Material de entrenamiento, 1957, CINVAR . See also, Caroline Ware, *El servicio social y la vivienda* (Bogotá: Publicaciones del Cinva, 1953).

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. See also, Organization of American States (hereafter, OASAR), minutes of inter-American socio-economic Council, March 1957.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

of community development throughout the world (especially the Philippines and Puerto Rico), several professors schooled the professional middle class in Colombia on the dangers of being “authoritarian.”<sup>163</sup>

In 1962, Carmen Sofia Torres, a rural specialist with a master’s degree from a U.S. university who worked in a joint program between the STACA and the ICT, gave a workshop for Cafeteros and CINVA. In her lecture, Carmen Torres narrated stories of an imagined authoritarian professional working in community development. Carlos Jiménez, argued the story cited by Carmen Torres, was an “outstanding [and] knowledgeable professional.”<sup>164</sup> He was assigned to work with a group of people from a popular neighborhood. After arriving in this rough area, the story went, he *assumed* he knew what the poor people wanted and, with no “careful criteria,” quickly assigned specific tasks to different members of the community. Even worse, this authoritarian professional cared neither for people’s reactions, opinions and expertise nor for their intelligence, experiences and needs. Moreover, he did not trust the people and thought they merely needed his “tutelage.”<sup>165</sup> Indeed, during meetings with the community, the

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. Also, in the training, although not explicitly, there are references to U.S. university professors who play quite a role in the development of these discourses on the democratic professional. See Richard Waverly Poston, *Democracy Speaks Many Tongues* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962). In 1960, CARE did a review of the program in Community development, the first of this kind in Latin America. Poston played a critical role—along with Gabriel Kaplan—in discussing constituting community development programs in Colombia during the late 1950s. In this book, he argued that although there had been certain problems, Colombia had “gone further than any other country on the South American continent to initiate a national community development program.” Poston, *Democracy Speaks Many Tongues*, 41.

<sup>164</sup> ICTA, fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento, 1955-1957; 1957-1959. See also ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento enviados por la división socio-económica de la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia 1957-1959

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

imagined professional only evaluated the performance of the assigned tasks and, worse, constantly felt obligated to tell the people what to do.<sup>166</sup> Neither listening to what people had to say nor opening spaces for discussion, the authoritarian professional was happy because everyone was busy working for the community.

After depicting Carlos Jiménez as an authoritarian professional, Carmen Torres carefully explained to those professionals at the workshop how this story was a “faithful expression” of several authoritarian attitudes: that is to say, the specific ways professionals sometimes act toward the laboring classes. For Torres, the major problem was that Carlos Jiménez did not trust the people.<sup>167</sup> By believing only in his own knowledge, argued Torres, Jiménez thought that he had to be evaluating, assigning tasks and giving the poor orders about what to do. Although he believed himself a success, Carmen went on to argue, Carlos was an ignorant professional precisely because he did not know or trust that the people could develop an awareness of their own problems. Because of his ignorance and distrust of the people, their participation in democracy was inevitably bound to last “only hours.” As a result, Torres continued, this authoritarian professional went to these rough areas and only encountered “rejection, resistance and apathy.” Above all, argued Torres, the people themselves would hardly “desire [or] want” this authoritarian professional or anybody associated with him.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. See also ICTA, fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: adiestramiento de personal, 1955-1957; 1957-1959.

Then there was the second type. In training workshops, national and international consultants detailed how, along with the authoritarian professional, there was also the paternalist. Unlike the former, who was easily to detect, the latter could be difficult to discern precisely because of his pretensions to be democratic. With the best intentions, he would quickly seek to please the people without pondering what were the real “felt needs” of peasants and workers.<sup>169</sup> He was willing to work with the people, it was argued, but he was usually confused precisely because this paternalistic professional would like to think *for*, rather than think *as*, the peasants. As a consequence of this confusion, this professional could get sporadically interested in people’s lives as long as he could “always keep the [real] authority in his hands.” And the people themselves, the lecturers claimed, would not develop the awareness of their own problems because they would expect the professional to make the decisions for them. This paternalistic relationship would just create dependent, unaware people who would just go for the short-term and immediate material benefits without becoming conscious of their own social situation. All in all, he would not be able to “change things a bit.” Neither interested in profound transformations nor able to “inculcate desires for change and democracy,” the paternalistic professional was bound to be quickly forgotten. Indeed, the people could easily forget him precisely because they had experienced no change as a result of his presence.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> ICTA, fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento, 1955-1957; 1957-1959. ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento enviados por la división socio-económica de la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia 1957-1959.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.



In stark contrast to these two types of professionals, consultants and national experts offered the third type as the appropriate model. In order to distance themselves from paternalistic and autocratic behaviors, professionals needed to be schooled in democratic dispositions, aspirations, desires and attitudes to become, above all, the “true professional man.” Roberto Vélez, a consultant for CINVA who on several occasions gave workshops and job orientations for ICT and the Caja de Vivienda Popular, began a training session in April 1959 by designing a sign to be posted at the entrance of the room where the training would take place.<sup>171</sup> The sign, Vélez argued, was intended to generate within the professional a consciousness of the role he needed to play in society. Written over a map of Colombia, the sign read:

We are professionals. We believe in progress and we are not here just to make material improvements but to build democracy. Democracy is you!<sup>172</sup>

As is eloquently shown in this sign, professionals were continuously subjected to lessons on how to conduct themselves democratically when “working with the people.” In contrast to autocratic and paternalistic men, these new professionals would act by exercising a democratic capacity to know how to work with and alongside the people. That is, the democratic professional was competent in helping the people

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<sup>171</sup> CINVAR, apuntes de clase, asesoráis y entrenamiento, carpeta: apuntes del entrenamiento para profesionales del Instituto de Crédito Territorial, 1957-1959. See also, ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento enviados por la división socio-económica de la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia 1957-1959. Roberto Velez specifically followed an example given in Richard Waverly Poston’s book *Democracy Speaks Many Tongues*, about the community program in the Philippines. As mentioned earlier, during the late 1959 and early 1960s several Colombia “experts” went to Philippines to see the experiences of the community development program. Although I have not been able to see how Roberto Velez was connected to that research trip, I think the main point is that these processes were transnational in nature, but as we see in the quote, it was cited according to the Colombia circumstances.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. The original version in Spanish reads: “Somos profesionales. Creemos en el progreso y no estamos aquí solo para hacer mejoras económicas y materiales sino más bien para construir democracia en Colombia. Ustedes son la democracia.”

discover and become aware of their own talents, potentials and innate desires, according to the appropriate social and cultural norms of the peasants and workers themselves. While the authoritarian professional would silence the poor by imposing the “high cultural ethos” of his social condition on the people, the democratic man would cultivate the “poor’s specific virtues,” so they, the peasants and the workers, would realize by themselves how to live in democratic communities. And precisely because people themselves would not initially recognize their own potential to become aware of their own problems and social situation, the democratic professional would be capable of harmonizing “people’s interests,” coordinating their “felt and unfelt needs” and awakening their “dormant desires for change.”<sup>173</sup> In all, *he* was capable of embodying democratic attitudes, the capacity to talk about—and with—the people because he was able to know what the hierarchically marked *we* needed to feel, have and think to live in democracy. As training materials from a state office put it, there was “no need for authoritarian elite transmitters of knowledge,” but rather

a democratic professional who can put his knowledge at the service of those who really need it...A professional who truly understands that democracy is the process through which the people become aware of their place in society, their roles to play [in it], their interests, their felt needs, desires and problems. A democratic professional who knows that every democracy begins with the people...a democratic professional who uses knowledge, prestige, expertise to comprehend who the people really are...a democratic professional who makes the best use of people’s intellect within their reach...a democratic professional in whom the people can see a friend. In all, a professional who does not impose or force...but rather guides... negotiates and helps people to help themselves in becoming aware of how to live in democracy. A democratic professional who knows the people’s needs, consciousness of their responsibilities and roles in democracy.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento enviados por la división socio-económica de la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia 1957-1959. See also, CINVAR, apuntes de clase, asesorías y

In 1961, for example, Virginia Gutierrez, a very influential anthropologist who worked as a consultant at CINVA, and Gabriel Kaplan, a U.S. consultant at FEDECAFE, gave lectures to professional workers from several different state agencies. Although speaking in different places, they similarly elaborated on how a true professional would be able to create the necessary democratic environment for the people to experience development and progress.<sup>175</sup> According to them, the democratic role to be played by the middle-class professional was to guide the people to become aware of their own latent and innate potentials so they, the peasants and workers, “could discover democracy [by] themselves.”<sup>176</sup> Indeed, the middle-class professional needed to foster the conditions under and through which the people were able to become aware of their “own interests, needs...[and] social situations” and, in doing so, to set out “their own goals.” In stark contrast to the authoritarian and paternalistic professional behaviors, the democratic professional would be capable of recognizing the latent existence of these innate desires for democracy. As a democratic professional,

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entrenamiento, carpeta: material de entrenamiento para profesionales de oficinas estatales: programas de entrenamiento profesional, 1957-1959

<sup>175</sup> I plan to elaborate how her studies on the (racial) regionalization of the Colombian family played a very important role in educating these middle-class professional. Arguing that these professionals needed to know about the poor families of the nation, she put in practice her analysis through which race and sexual behavior were connected. According to her, it was imperative that the professionals knew the different male-female relationship, production, and household development across the country. Only then, these professional would be able to maximize the difference so that people themselves could become active participants of democracy according to their own racial, regional, and class conditions. As I am trying to elaborate here, these political arguments were not merely empty rhetoric, they became crucial in the formation of a middle-class. See: Virginia Gutiérrez de Pineda, *La Familia en Colombia: Estudio Antropológico* (Fridburgo: Oficina Internacional de Investigaciones Sociales, Feres), 1962; *Familia y Cultura en Colombia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo, 1968).

<sup>176</sup> ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento profesional 1957-1959. See also, CINVAR, apuntes de clase, asesorías y entrenamiento, carpeta: material de entrenamiento para el Instituto de Crédito Territorial y programas de vivienda, 1957-1959.

furthermore, he would also be competent to discern how often the people were unconscious of their own potential, capacities and desires to become aware themselves and, on the other, “their own social agency [*protagonismo social*].” And yet, and unlike the authoritarian and paternalistic professional, who would merely “blame the people themselves,” the democratic professional was able to know all too well that, if the people were unaware or did not recognize their democratic potential, it was precisely because of how the poor themselves had been shaped by a “peculiar ethos,” specific social forces, social constraints and particular cultural conditions.<sup>177</sup> Thus, for the people to be able to recognize their democratic potential, they needed to change “their own ethos.” And in order to change their own ethos,” the people would have to become aware and recognize their democratic potential.<sup>178</sup>

In constantly rehearsing this tautology, the democratic professional was paradoxically constituted as the crowning figure in a hierarchical/class (re)distribution of tasks. He would be able to explicate what the people—“peasants, working class...the underprivileged”—could not recognize, or become aware of, by themselves. Indeed, the democratic professional would be able to understand the “cultural and social conditions” to be overcome by the people so they can become aware of their “own desires for change and potential for democracy.”<sup>179</sup> Contrary to the authoritarian professional, who would be pleased with imposing a “foreign ethos” to which the

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: material de entrenamiento para profesionales en programas de vivienda urbana y rural 1957-1959. See also, CINVAR, apuntes de clase, asesorías y entrenamiento, carpeta: material de entrenamiento para profesionales de oficinas estatales: programas de entrenamiento profesional, 1957-1959.

people themselves could not adapt, the democratic professional would be competent to help people help themselves *to the full extent* of their own “human resources, mental capacities, felt-needs and common interests.”<sup>180</sup> [getting too repetitious]

Furthermore, the professional was democratic enough to descend hierarchically from his own “cultural environment” into the distinct culturally and socially determined ethos to *guide* people to recognize their own conditions and *limitations*. By appreciating and understanding, and above all, respecting their own specific values and ways of thinking, he would conduct the people in helping themselves—that is, in “liv[ing] democratically in their own way.” The professional would be “democratically competent” in hierarchically adjusting knowledge, abstractions, explanation, teachings and expertise from his “cultural environment” to the “limited” one he was reaching out to. In so doing, he was not to *desire* the people to be like him, but rather to conduct, that is *act upon*, the poor according to their own place in society so they, the poor, could become capable of governing themselves.<sup>181</sup> Driven only by the necessity to be democratic, these professionals would do their job by allowing the peasants and workers to know their limited place in society—and more importantly, would teach them how to live democratically according to that social position and cultural condition.

He, unlike the authoritarian who would not take the “conditions [and] the interests of the poor” into consideration, would be capable of knowing exactly the extent to which people’s ways of being allow them to learn to live in democracy. And when facing “resistance, apathy...indifference and disagreement,” he would know how “to negotiate and compromise” *according* to “people’s social location, behaviors,

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

idioms, motivations, local traditions, beliefs and cultural conditions.” Indeed, by cultivating a profound knowledge of the poor, he would be competent to get along quite well with them, to the point where he could work quietly, even imperceptibly, among the people themselves. And yet he would be a democratic professional precisely because, even being among and getting along with the people, he would not be in danger of losing his “self autonomy” and the “sense of who he really was.” That is to say, a professional who, first, would be capable of moving *throughout* society to adapt his knowledge according to different social settings and, second, transfer himself from one setting to another mentally and physically, without losing his hierarchical democratic self. And in so doing, this democratic professional could set limits on the types of knowledge the people would be able to learn, adjudicating the variety of activities the poor would be able to engage with, and, above all, defining the kind of participation “the people [would be] ready” to pursue to live in democracy.<sup>182</sup>

Thus, the historical intelligibility and the very existence of the democratic professional working for state rule depended upon a hierarchical constitution of the peasants and workers as the “other” in dire need of being understood, taught, guided and above all, governed, on how to live in democracy *according* to their particular “social conditions.” During the consolidation of the National Front and its policies to create the conditions to secure peace and democracy, state rule was to take place through the process of a hierarchical fragmentation, categorization and *classification* between those who were supposed to rule in the service of the state and those who were supposed to be ruled by those who were categorized as democratic professionals.

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<sup>182</sup> CINVAR, apuntes de clase, asesorías y entrenamiento, carpeta, Instituto de Crédito Territorial, programas de vivienda rural y urbana. Programas de entrenamiento a personal, 1965-1959.

Neither too proximate nor too distant, the middle-class professional could achieve his democratic role insofar as he could govern and maintain the very hierarchies, distinctions, and categorizations that made the poor stay in *their own* socially specific place mind, as several sources argued, “their own business.”<sup>183</sup>

Such democratic professionals, furthermore, had to be carefully guided on how to produce new “anti-racist thinking and feelings” as well as “novel attitudes—that is, “fresh” ways to act upon who “were the poor and suffer the most.” In several training workshops, CINVA classes, lectures and evaluations during the late 1950s and early 1960s, middle-class professionals repeatedly were told to think of, and feel about, the people in a “different way.” Professors, consultants and other “experts” usually began discussions by arguing that the political disruption of La Violencia since the late 1940s had been a product of “classist thoughts and feelings.” In order to overcome those conditions, and reach peace and democracy, these professionals had to understand that the peasants were not a “homogenous group.”<sup>184</sup> The teaching materials suggest, moreover, that the main objective of these lectures was that professionals needed to take the active role in creating the conditions for peace, progress and democracy.

Deploying transnational discourses of the importance of the middle class for democratic

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<sup>183</sup> In the following chapters I analyze how this exclusionary inclusion defining the democratic professionals would be cited and redefined when the middle-class professional “encounter” the poor, as well as the elite. Although (or perhaps because) middle-class professionals were conscripted of empire, they would become estranged by it. The democratically defined formation of the middle class, that is to say, hierarchical fragmentation of governance, would be challenged by creating new arts of governance. In short, the professional middle class would begin to develop strong attachment toward the poor to the point that the attachment disappeared.

<sup>184</sup> CINVAR, Resúmenes de Clase No 3, material de entrenamiento profesional. See also Consejo Interamericano Económico y Social, JX 1980.29, No22, R 27, No3.

rule, these experts encouraged professionals to cultivate in themselves a “new mindset and sentiments” toward “the people’s ways of being.”<sup>185</sup>

For too long, the democratic professionals were constantly told, some of their colleagues had understood the poor merely as a “homogenous mass of ignorant and miserable people deserving their hopeless destiny of violence and poverty.”<sup>186</sup> There were too many professionals, furthermore, who still maintained a colonial attitude when thinking about and acting upon the peasants and the workers: that is to say, an “elitist” disposition that provoked an understanding of the people as only composed of “biologically inferior human beings.”<sup>187</sup> Indeed, the professionals were specifically told *not* to think of the poor as “native, primitive, savage, Indian or inhuman,” because these descriptions could only constitute social prejudices.<sup>188</sup> These prejudices and attitudes would have to be excluded from the actions, thoughts and feelings of a democratic professional. Emphatically and repetitively, these trainees were tutored to never regard the poor as “fundamentally and biologically inferior beings” but rather as “peasants, (*campesinos*) and working people, (*gente trabajadora*), the dispossessed (*desposeídos*).” These characterizations, it was explained, would illustrate the real social situation of those who “suffered from material and economic deprivation.”

Furthermore, against “elitist...irrational and anti-democratic” understandings of the

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<sup>185</sup> ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: material de entrenamiento para profesionales en programas de vivienda urbana y rural 1957-1959.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. See also Orlando Fals Borda, *Acción Comunal en una Vereda Colombiana*, *Monografías Sociológicas* 4 (Marzo 1960) iii. See Universidad Nacional Archives (hereafter UNALA) Fondo: Orlando Fals Borda, serie I-V. Vereda de saucio y visiones de Colombia caja # 27-33.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.



poor, the democratic professional would think of and develop an attitude toward the poor based on real experiences about who “they really [were.]”<sup>189</sup>

It was, therefore, the democratic task of the middle-class professional to develop a complex understanding of the society. Contrary to the “elitist attitude” that constantly portrayed the poor as “ignorant” because of their “innate biological characteristics,” the democratic professional should know how these depictions were merely “myths,” far from reality. He, as a democratic professional, would be able to understand that “the social circumstances of the peasants and working people” were the effects of specific “cultural immersion and different social forces.” The “democratic attitude” within the professional would lead him to believe that the “peasants and working people” were not “ignorant” but rather, merely “unaware” of their own social situation.<sup>190</sup>

### **Profesionales queridos.**

Much of the historical scholarship on developmentalism and technical knowledge in recent years has worked from the shared assumption that the mastery of reason and rationality were at the center of how modernization and discourses on development operated historically.<sup>191</sup> As a result, historians and social scientists alike

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<sup>189</sup> ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: material de entrenamiento para profesionales en programas de vivienda urbana y rural 1957-1959. ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento enviados por la división socio-económica de la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia 1957-1959.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> See especially, Escobar, *Encountering Development* and Rabe *Most Dangerous*. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*. See also Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*. For a different view, see Ann Laura Stoler, “Affective States,” in David Nugent, *A Companion to Anthropology of Politics*. 2005. As I will elaborate in the next

tend to make a sharp distinction—a Cartesian division—between what they consider the reasons and the sentiments behind economic reform, population management, training agencies and social programs throughout the 1950s and 1960s in the Americas. In contrast, I argue that the policies implemented by the National Front were profoundly shaped by a concern to educate sentiments, aspirations and attachments imagined as required for state rule in a society seeking to overcome La Violencia and secure a lasting peace. In so doing, it was argued, a truly democratic middle-class professional would emerge to prepare all members of society to experience social harmony, political stability and economic progress.<sup>192</sup> Thus, it was not, as we tend to assume, that these preoccupations were a smokescreen for the real policies of the National Front. Rather, I maintain, these processes of sentimental schooling of middle-class professionals were crucial for the National Front to legitimize its political invitation for a national reconciliation.

During the late 1950s, one of the major objectives of this class preparation was to shape professional sensibilities toward the poor. The content as well as the form of the archives—teaching outlines, discussion, stories and lecture minutes—present the discourses on community development as a process for discovering “the felt-needs of the poor” so that “social progress and democracy” could be achieved. Those felt needs were not to be identified by imposing “foreign ideas” on the popular environment, or by producing knowledge about the poor from a distance. Rather, it was necessary to structure a hierarchical relation of fondness and intimacy between these democratic

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chapter, these teaching discourses would be appropriated by the middle-class professionals in order to educate the elites sentimentally.

<sup>192</sup> CINVAR, “Agentes del Cambio”

professionals and those who needed them the most: “peasants, working people...and [those] economically deprived.” In doing so, it was argued, the professional would become *likeable*, *desirable* and *trusted* sources of identification and inspiration for the people themselves.<sup>193</sup> As countless private consultants, state officials and transnational experts continuously advised professionals who would soon be working with the poor during the 1950s and 1960s,

Those professionals with no feelings are a matter of the past...[there is] no need for the dispassionate professional with no sentiments for the poor...no need for professionals who feel ashamed of themselves [when] working with the poor...no need for professionals who do not wish to be loved [*querido*] by the poor. [In contrast, what is needed is] professionals committed to the social problems of their own countries. Professionals who are conscious of their social role...professionals who feel strong attachment [*un apego muy fuerte*] toward those who need them the most...professionals who feel proud of working with the poor...a true professional who will do everything possible to inspire fondness [*cariño*], love, in the poor’s feelings toward the professionals...a professional who is loved/wanted/desired by the people themselves.<sup>194</sup>

It is clear in this eloquent statement how professionals needed to exercise state rule by embodying the active masculine role to win the love and admiration of the poor. In workplaces, conferences, classes and workshops, experts and consultants pondered what kind of attachment the middle-class professional should cultivate when working with the people. In 1958, for instance, Rafael Samper, the director of the Social Economic Affairs for Cafeteros and consultant for CARE, began his training workshop at ICT by considering the “major social obstacle to achieving democracy and peace in Colombian society.” Although well equipped for cultivating awareness about poverty,

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<sup>193</sup> ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento profesional 1957-1959. See also CINVAR, agentes sociales del cambio, notas del adiestramiento de profesionales, programa conjunto con el Instituto de Crédito Territorial, 1956-1957; 1957-1959. And CMCA, rectoría, actas, políticas para los profesionales, 1959.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

Samper lectured, professionals, with a few rare exceptions, “lack feelings” toward the poor. These professionals were an obstacle precisely because they were a “type of man” who did not “*feel* any feelings” for the destiny of development and progress. Interested mostly in material rewards, these professionals, Samper was sad to report, were aware of poverty but remained insensitive toward it. Furthermore, such professionals knew all too well the conditions, reasons and consequences of poverty. They could even, Samper said repeatedly, become experts in writing theoretical treatises about the poor. Yet, Samper cautioned, such professional would write those treatises without any “feeling... attachment...sensitivity [or] sympathy for whom the people really [were]. Samper went as far as to conclude that unless “these feelings were awakened” within such professionals, their “democratic role” was necessarily bound to fail.<sup>195</sup>

These real feelings, sympathies and sensibilities should be, therefore, at the very center of the hierarchical relations between those professionals and those who were supposed to be ruled. In a job orientation in 1962, for example, Roberto Vélez, a consultant working for the CINVA, narrated a fictional story to illustrate how professionals should behave when encountering the poor. The purpose of the exercise was twofold. On the one hand, it was necessary to convey an idea of what kind of sentiments the professionals should manifest toward the poor, and, on the other, to truly sensitize the professionals toward “those who need them the most.” According to Vélez, the story depicted the normal social situation of a poor community near the capital city. Although it was possible to recognize in the members of the community

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<sup>195</sup> ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento enviados por la división socio-económica de la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia 1957-1959. See also, CINVAR, agentes sociales del cambio, notas del adiestramiento de profesionales, programa conjunto con el Instituto de Crédito Territorial, 1956-1957; 1957-1959.

their latent potential, talent, forces and eagerness for change, “social constraints and cultural legacies” had “limite[d]” and stunted the “active participation” of the “peasants” in promoting “social progress.” In this fictional but realistic environment of poverty, the members of the community were constantly frustrated because they were unable to do anything about the “unlivable housing conditions, constant context of violence ... irresponsible mothers, drunk fathers, lack of culture ... apathy ... passivity ... individualism ... and community disorganization.”<sup>196</sup>

Although the teaching outlines written by Roberto Vélez were rather limited and there is no record of responses by those professionals attending the job orientation, we can grasp some notion of the discussion that took place after presenting this fictional story. It seems that the main question addressed to the participants in the job orientation was how to understand the situation of the poor. According to Vélez, some professionals showed neither empathy nor emotion for the social situation of the poor. Furthermore, it seems, some professionals exhibited a “sentiment of strangeness [*extrañeza*]” toward the poor.<sup>197</sup> On the one hand, they demonstrated their profound ignorance about the real conditions under which the people lived. On the other hand, and perhaps more worrying for Vélez, they made evident a deep elitist feeling of disdain precisely because of a lack of concern for the social situation of the poor. Hence these professionals, said Vélez, were only able to produce a desire to blame “the poor

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<sup>196</sup> CINVAR, apuntes de clase, asesorías y entrenamiento, carpeta: apuntes del entrenamiento para profesionales del Instituto de Crédito Territorial, 1957-1959. See also, ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: apuntes de adiestramiento enviados por la división socio-económica de la Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia 1957-1959.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. See also, CINVAR, agentes sociales del cambio, notas de entrenamiento profesionales, octubre 1959.

for their own poverty.” Showing neither connection toward, nor empathy for, the people, these professionals ended up feeling that poverty was a well-deserved condition. And precisely because of that, the poor should be uplifted without “car[ing] ” what they had to say. Even worse, concluded Vélez, the people were to be taught with neither affection nor respect for what they thought.<sup>198</sup>

Conversely, Vélez presented some sketchy notes on the teaching outlines that lauded the reactions and contributions of unnamed professionals. Specifically, Vélez noted that some “true professionals” responded positively. That is, they were showing what he called “democratic emotions” and “sentimental concerns” for the difficult cultural conditions and social situations of the people. Indeed, these professionals, noted Vélez, could find gratification, satisfaction and enjoyment in feeling an “attachment [*apego*]” toward the poor. These true middle-class professionals, moreover, were willing to get their “hands *dirty*” and get into these rough places to listen to peoples’ voices and to understand and sympathize with their wants and needs.<sup>199</sup> Equally important, these democratic professionals would seek to feel the people’s problems, show affection for their situation, touch who they really were and develop a social sensibility for how they lived.<sup>200</sup> As Vélez put it by citing—and this is the only citation provided in the teaching notes—an unnamed professional who reacted to the discussion of the fictional story:

I am moved by the situation of the poor...it is necessary to understand the situation they are going through...I can imagine how they feel...I can imagine

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Again, in the next chapter I will elaborate how these professional mobilized this same discourses to create a class and gender rule project of their own.

myself feeling [their] problems...I can feel what they are experiencing...[only then] could I know the complexities of the communities...what they want, how they live, how they think...their needs and wants.<sup>201</sup>

By truly feeling and experiencing the conditions of the poor, democratic middle-class professionals would be able to produce the needed social “catalyst.” Indeed, these middle-class professionals would be able to build up a democratic and “intimate” rapport with the poor. Only then, it was argued, could the poor—“peasants, working people and the economically deprived”—be understood, because that understanding of the poor would not be intangible or abstract any longer, but, rather, incomparably “enjoyably,” keenly “*felt*,” and profoundly desired.<sup>202</sup>

Although some scholars would see these discourses at worst as empty rhetoric and at best as a smokescreen for the real agenda of the National Front, I would argue that these processes of education, habituation and guidance of the proper proportions of feelings and desires produced a vertical encompassment of rule.<sup>203</sup> This vertical structure, furthermore, was pivotal in creating a middle-class state professional who had to be constantly recognized as masculine and democratic by actively desiring and having feelings for the poor. Indeed, middle-class professionals were to be democratically guided in, first, deriving pleasure from identifying themselves with the poor, and second, finding gratification and enjoyment working “along with” the peasants, working people and the economically dispossessed. Thus, in order to be

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> CINVAR, apuntes de clase, asesorías y entrenamiento, carpeta: políticas de entrenamiento para el programa conjunto del vivienda rural y urbana del Instituto de Crédito Territorial, 1957-1959. See also, ICTA fondo: subgerencia general, serie: gabinete del sub-gerente general, sección: departamento de personal, carpeta: comités de adiestramiento 1957-1959

<sup>203</sup> See James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, “Spatializing States”;

recognized as a democratic professional—and possess the proper affection and desires—it was necessary to govern the people as the “other” to be hierarchically respected according to their own position. If the professional were to belong to, rather than have an attachment for, the people, the democratic recognition could not take place precisely because there would be no vertical hierarchical relationship: there would be no peasant to be attached to, nor workers to have feelings for, nor laboring classes to be identified with. Indeed, there would not be a subject who could provide fascination, satisfaction and pleasure—crucial desires and sentiments imagined as requirements to be a middle class democratic professional working for the state. To meet those requirements, the professional would have “strong feelings of respect,” for the people and “their own social position, culture and situation” and show “sentiments of affection, understanding, and trust for [the people’s] agency [*protagonismo*] in shaping society.”<sup>204</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to offer a historical interrogation of the political rationalities and methodologies of rule through which a professional middle class became intelligible as a foundational democratic force after World War II. This professional middle class was not just a transparent, transplanted product of the United States that other parts of the world would either import or reject. Rather, I have endeavored to offer a critical interrogation—however provisional—to explain how the very constitution of the professional middle class became intelligible as a historical formation embedded into a

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.



(new) form of U.S. imperial rule.<sup>205</sup> The consolidation of a democratic middle class, I would conclude, was crucial in this new imperial rule precisely because professionals were hierarchically constituted as the best governors who would be able to guide, revive, activate, vitalize, and organize “every *human capacity* of society.”<sup>206</sup> In the Colombian context, the National Front administrations appropriated these transnational discourses by selecting and training middle-class professionals as a democratic requirement to overcome La Violencia and, more importantly, to establish peace. These middle-class professionals, furthermore, would become the representatives of state rule and thus obliged to educate and prepare both the elites and the laboring classes on how to live harmoniously and peacefully. In order to do so, transnational consultants, university professors (both from Colombia and the U.S.), policymakers and experts argued that neither the elites nor the laboring classes should practice state rule. Rather, a middle-class professional was imagined as the quintessential and necessary figure to exercise democratic state rule. This imperial constitution of a transnational professional middle class must, I argue, be understood not as a distorted variant of the U.S. middle class ideal or as an incompetent implementation of otherwise well-intentioned and benevolent U.S. policy. Rather, I contend, the transnational formation of a professional middle class was an intrinsic part of a new U.S. democratic imperial project of rule after World War II. This conclusion invites us to rethink the meanings, operations, political rationalities and technologies of rule at work in democracy, rather than assuming their benign or banal qualities. It is not my goal to evaluate if—or

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<sup>205</sup> Elsewhere I argue that although the middle-class professionals became the embodied evidence that this imperial humanist project was working, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the middle-class professional created a new project—one I refer to as professional democracy.

<sup>206</sup> Notificaciones de la Comisión Nacional para la Reforma Pública en Colombia, Community Organization and Development, Colombia Technical Assistance Program, UNA(250) S 0175-03334-02, Bogotá, 13 December, 1956. My emphasis.

where—the middle class could be more or less democratic but, instead, to critically reconsider its crucial role in the consolidation of U.S. imperial rule in the Americas after the Second World War.

Having explored this transnational formation, I now move to see how these historical problems were experienced and appropriated by those professionals designated to carry out a new form of rule.

## Chapter 2: “Doing Our Job.” Middle-Class Women, Middle-Class Men and the Formation of a Professional Democracy in Bogotá, 1958-1965

The task of this professional generation is particularly important. They have everything in front of them to uplift us away from La Violencia to a period of peace, democracy, stability and tranquility. They just have to revive and vitalize every member from of the base of society to its summit...All we need is a professional with sharp consciousness to instill social sensibility and humanness in all members of society...a professional capable of reconstructing a true understandings between capital and labor ...All we need is a true professional to instill in the society as a whole the desire for progress... the desire to live in democracy...a professional capable of accomplishing peace...to modernize our society by closing the gap between those who have everything and those who have nothing. All we need is a professional who has the preparation to deal with those at the base of society social base and those at its summit... then peace, political stability and a true democracy will necessarily follow... this is the task of the twentieth century... nothing else we need to do[!]<sup>207</sup>

Peace cannot exist without equality; this is an intellectual value desperately in need of reiteration, demonstration and reinforcement. The seduction of the word itself—peace—is that is surrounded by, indeed drenched in, the blandishment of approval, uncontroversial eulogizing, sentimental endorsement. It takes a good deal more courage work to dissolve words like “war” and “peace...”<sup>208</sup>

In 1958, Luis Escobar, a rural extensionist working for the Colombian Ministry of Agriculture with a program sponsored and coordinated by Colombian American Cooperative Technical Service in Agriculture (SCATA), wrote extensively about his obligations and duties as a professional working for democratic change. Escobar was excited to learn it was about time for him to put in practice his (middle) class preparation, motivation, knowledge and, above all, commitment to work for

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<sup>207</sup> Exchange between Alberto Lleras Camargo, J.L. Le Bret and Orlando Fals Borda, Despacho Señor Presidente, Comité de Relaciones Labores, 1958-1960, Presidential Archive (Hereafter, PA) and Orlando Fals Borda Archive, Universidad Nacional de Colombia 1958-1960.

<sup>208</sup> Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 142.

“greater democratic good of the Colombian nation.” Although he faced daily frustrations, Escobar was committed to the task of assembling a “truly, strong...muscular democracy” for Colombia, as his annotated yet disorganized field notes produced during the late 1950s and 1960s suggest. To do so, he insisted, all members of society needed to cultivate those “human qualities” that one cannot put a price on. Escobar, furthermore, wanted to bring about a professional democracy premised upon the inculcation of “human empathy and social sensibility” *within* the ignorant oligarchs, so they could potentially harbor feelings toward the social experiences and cultural situations of the national laboring classes. Equally important, it was crucial to encourage a “mental passion” for democratic change *within* the peasants and the working classes. Escobar understood, it seems, that in order to become a true middle-class professional he had to undertake what he referred to as the task of the twentieth century—to guide the laboring classes in becoming neither those oppressed by others nor the oppressors of anyone else but rather, and above all, the owners and “active masters of their own life.”<sup>209</sup> Indeed, Escobar, like many other professional men and women working for state institutions during the late 1950s and 1960s, wanted to go up to the “summit of society [*cúspide social*]” and transform an “evasive oligarchs” into “truly national elites,” as well as go down to the “base of society” to awake “the hidden yet potential democratic sensibilities of the poor.” In doing his job—and that was all he was doing, he argued, as a committed professional—Escobar envisioned a democracy through which he could become the “*most valuable*” human being in society precisely because all of

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<sup>209</sup> Notas de campo, programas rurales y desarrollo de la comunidad, subgerencia: fomento industrial, 1958-1961, Minister of Agriculture, Colombian-American Cooperative Technical Service in Agriculture Archive (hereafter, STACA).

his professional superiority, knowledge, commitment and preparation existed only to prepare others to believe in, and indeed to long for, the very possibility of experiencing political stability, social harmony, democracy and peace. With all of these tools at his disposal, moreover, Escobar wanted to transform a traditional society characterized by “social indifference, mutual [class] ignorance, unawareness of each other’s social interests... inhumanness [and] prejudice” into a true democratic society based upon “social empathy, compassion, human emotion, [class] understanding ...intelligence, competency [and] humanness.”<sup>210</sup>

In the previous chapter I attempted to interrogate how a professional middle-class became historically inserted in an U.S. imperial governmentality after World War II. In doing so, I elaborated on the historical conditions through which middle-class professionals were selected, trained and hierarchically positioned to become the counselors of the oligarchs and the sympathizers of the laboring class as part of a transnational/imperial project to create a new form of democratic rule. In this chapter I move into how these professionals attempted to carry out their political class assignment in their endeavor to become middle-class women and middle-class men. To be clear, at issue is neither what professionals knew, nor the incongruence or authenticity of their class and gender practices according to a putatively external ideal of a middle class. Rather, I am interested in interrogating what happened when these professionals intimately encountered those whom they thought desperately needed class guidance in the ways of democracy, so that an experience of violence could be overcome. As Escobar eloquently suggested in the late 1950s, the middle-class professionals needed to create the necessary social and political conditions to

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

experience democracy and peace by working along with those at the bottom and those at the top. In so doing, I maintain, these professional women and men understood themselves as part of a middle class by redeploying their hierarchical positioning as best governors in society to assemble their own project of class and gender rule—a project I refer to as *professional democracy*.

Furthermore, by navigating these trained lives, I endeavor to problematize how in these never-ending class encounters were arenas in which professional women and men fought over, practiced and reconfigured the very political meanings of being, and performing as, middle class. My intent is not to repeat the by-now the familiar story of the omniscient expert who at a distance could utilize his panoptic, knowledgeable gaze to rule others. Quite to the contrary, at the center of this chapter are those professional women and men who, while attempting to structure their own project of class and gender politics, found themselves facing constant and tragic class dilemmas, gender frustrations, and collective deceptions. Those struggles, I argue, paradoxically created, as much as questioned, the gender and class hierarchies materializing a professional democracy.

**“Going Down to the Base of Society; Going Up to the Social Summit”—The Foundation of a Professional Democracy.**

The overthrow of Rojas Pinilla and the formalization of the bipartisan National Front in 1958 sought to establish a “new era” of peaceful, participative and pluralist civic culture by, on the one hand, inviting different social sectors to engage in a national political reconciliation, and, on the other, promoting the long-awaited possibility of achieving social peace. That is to say, it sought to achieve a social and political harmony between different class groups. The National Front, furthermore, attempted to legitimize the exclusionary practices of the two-party coalition by claiming the possibility of invoking the specter of La Violencia of the 1950s. Alberto Lleras Camargo sought to make a sharp distinction between his administration and the short-lived dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla (with whom La Violencia became quickly associated) by expanding programs and social policies that paradoxically had been initiated under the dictatorship. To be sure, Lleras Camargo’s administration began more systematic state social policies aimed at moving away from a confrontational style of politics. As part of a transnational dialogue, the National Front actively appropriated, as much as influenced, policies and ideas of the Alliance for Progress in order to legitimize the restricted Liberal-Conservative constitution. Specifically, as explained in the previous chapter, the National Front reclaimed the “real possibility” of achieving peace, democracy and progress by overcoming the putative problems, causes, consequences of La Violencia: “class misunderstanding, class oppositions, party politics [communism], ...party rivalry...party sectarianism,

political bossism and corruption.”<sup>211</sup> In promulgating a series of systematic policies to resolve these problems, I would like to contend, the different administrations of the National Front not only considered how to establish (new) containment strategies informed by a real and imagined anti-communist sentiments, as we have consistently argued, but also, and perhaps more importantly, confronted the possibility of discussing how rule should be working in democratic societies. At issue was, as President Lleras Camargo put it in 1959, how “to *make social relations right*.”<sup>212</sup>

Although historians and social scientists have rarely paid close attention to these policies as a central part of the constitution of the National Front during the late 1950s and 1960s, there are some who consistently see these social policies as a reflection of a National Front’s wishful thinking that, albeit with good intentions, were never translated into reality.<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, historians and social scientists

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<sup>211</sup>Letter from to Alberto Lleras Camargo to Richard Poston, April 14, 1960, despacho Señor Presidente, folder: comercio exterior, PA; See also, David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 226

<sup>212</sup>Letter from Richard W. Poston to Alberto Lleras Camargo, 12 December, 1960, despacho señor presidente, 1960-1961, Folder: comercio exterior, PA. My emphasis.

<sup>213</sup> Jonathan Hartlyn, *The Politics of Coalition Rule in Colombia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). See also Mauricio Archila, *Idas y venidas. Vueltas y revueltas. Protestas Sociales en Colombia, 1958-1990* (Bogotá: CINEP/ICANH) 2005; Daniel Pécaut, “Order and Violence: Two Sides of Colombian Stability,” in Fernando J. Devoto and Torcuato S. Di Tella, *Political Culture, Social Movements and Democratic Transition in South America* (Fondaziane Giangiachamo Feltrinelli), 1997; Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Medofilo Medina, *La historia de la protesta social en Colombia*; Cesar Ayala, *Nacionalismo y Populismo: Anapo y el Discurso Político de la oposición en Colombia: 1960-1966* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1995); César Ayala, *Resistencia y Oposición al establecimiento del frente nacional: Los orígenes de la Alianza nacional popular, 1953-1964* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1996); See also Forrest Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia* (New York: Verso, 2006). See Susana Romero Sánchez, “El Miedo a la Revolución: Interamericanismo y Anticomunismo en Colombia, 1958-1965” (Master’s thesis, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2007). Romero argues that, in fact, the National Front’s policies attempted to address the “social questions,” but she sees those policies only as a way to foster anticommunist fears. In Romero’s argument there is a tendency to celebrate the democratic role of Lleras Camargo, who is seen as a sincere president attempting to implement policies to resolve social problems but oligarch resistance in several cases got in the way for the good intentions of the president. Needless to say, I do not dispute that these policies were the result as much as the cause of a transnational anticommunist



have usually argued that this endeavor to create the social and political conditions to overcome violence and establish peace was precisely a distraction from the National Front's real political agenda. In arguing so, historians usually deliver preemptive judgments about policymakers' failure to truly implement the social policies they promoted.<sup>214</sup> That is to say, such historical understandings are highly conditioned by a tendency to evaluate what is conceived as the policy, on the one hand, and what is purportedly understood as real practices, on the other. In this critique, the policies implemented by the National Front were empty political rhetoric meant to justify (i.e., veil) the real lack of interest about the Colombian's major "social questions." Mauricio Archila, for instance, has argued that one of the major historical features of this period was precisely "social disregard," as if the very possibility of considering "social questions" would have made the National Front different—or least justified its political exclusionary practices. Specifically, several Colombian historians cite how Alberto Lleras Camargo sought to "reconstruct labor-capital relationships in more human ways...promote economic development...perfect the democratic institutions...forge modern societies with no class divisions as they are today." Furthermore, the argument goes, these policies would be constantly celebrated in different presidential administrations precisely as a way to mystify the continuation

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political sentiment, nor do I wish to argue against elite resistance. My argument, rather, is that we are missing a critical understanding about the very modality of rule that these policies were trying to create.

<sup>214</sup> Jonathan Hartlyn, for instance, categorized these policies as "frustrated reformism" precisely because these policies were ideas that never came to reality. If only they did, there would be a lot to celebrate about the National Front. All of these works then based their arguments in a evaluation: It would have been a success if they were truly and completely implemented. Of course, we need to see what it is done and what is said, but the analysis cannot be limited only to a relational evaluation of what is really done forgetting the political meanings of what is said. Jonathan Hartlyn, *The Politics of Coalition Rule in Colombia*.

of La Violencia, as well as to dissimulate the real concern for forestalling social/political protest and communism. It was simply a “rhetoric with good intentions,” because otherwise these policies would have been able to create a professional middle class that would have overcome the so-called class division and, by extension, put a “real end to La Violencia.”<sup>215</sup> This historical reasoning, I would maintain, mimics the very discussion happening among policymakers who also thought that the middle-class was the quintessential requirement to overcome La Violencia, and create the necessary conditions to reach democracy and peace. And yet these historians conclude that the formation of the middle class (as argued in chapter one), was at the very center of this putatively political distraction, and that these professionals—and their political assignment to create a society distanced from confrontational style of politics—were, at best, bound to fail or, at worst, politically inconsequential.

In this chapter I question these historical arguments. These social policies were, I believe, more than an ideological embellishment purposely crafted to dissimulate the exclusionary practices of the National Front. It was a methodology, a strategy, and a modality of rule at the very core of how the National Front wanted to remake Colombian society. These initiatives, policies, political discourses and social projects, initiated during the dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla but markedly consolidated during the first administrations the National Front, aimed at overcoming, and eventually forgetting, La Violencia and establishing peace, democracy and political stability; as such, they played a pivotal role how class rule should work in

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<sup>215</sup> See Archila *Idas y venidas*, 346-347; Latham *Modernization as a Ideology*; Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

democracies. Most of all, I hope to elucidate the specific historical practices of class and gender rule that were put to work when these professionals were attempting to create the social and political conditions to, first, overcome La Violencia and, second, reach peace and democracy.

Constantly constructing this political legitimization in sharp contrast to a recent dictatorship and its association with the causes and consequences of La Violencia, the National Front continuously promoted what it was considered the professionalization of social and political relationship between different classes as crucial way to achieve democracy, peace and political stability. The traditional political class had lost legitimacy to exercise politics, as they were now seen as the embodied evidence of conventional party rivalry, confrontational politics and political bossism—the very causes, and certainly, the consequences associated with La Violencia and the dictatorship. It is in this discursive matrix that the middle-class professional became paramount in the consolidation in the practices of rule during the first years of the National Front.

Very soon after coming to office in 1958, in a practice that would become common during the 1960s, Alberto Lleras Camargo intensified an extensive dialogue with national and international “experts” to advance the professionalization of the social relations as a part of the political preoccupation of overcoming La Violencia. After some years of intense conversations, in 1959 Lleras Camargo composed a long letter to be sent out to several state institutions and private organizations describing the democratic undertaking of a new generation of professionals, to which they

should be committed while performing their job.<sup>216</sup> Advised by the very influential Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, who played a pivotal role in the consolidation of community development programs while director of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the French priest J.L. Lebreton, who had recently delivered the results of a influential study of Colombian social conditions, Lleras Camargo specifically told “the professionals of Colombia” to actively engage in the “task of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”: to turn Colombia “into a democratic society comparable to those industrialized nations of the world.” Very much echoing the training and teaching discourses these professionals were subjected to, Lleras Camargo wanted to let these middle-class professionals know that, given their class preparation, they had been chosen to “revive, activate [and] vitalize every *human capacity* of the society.”<sup>217</sup> It was imperative for middle-class professionals, furthermore, to accumulate a national knowledge about those at the base of society, as well as those at its summit. Duplicating the language of political negotiation between Laureano Gómez, the leader of the Conservative Party and himself as a representative of the Liberal side for the consolidation of the National Front in late 1956, Lleras Camargo repeatedly wrote in the letter that professionals should be concerned with “forgetting La Violencia, reconquering liberty...and the interests of the great majority...thus achieving a political stability for the whole nation.”<sup>218</sup> Furthermore, the first

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<sup>216</sup> Public Letter from Alberto Lleras Camargo to the Professionals of Colombia, Despacho Señor Presidente, Comité de Relaciones Labores, February, 15, 1959. This letter was also found in Instituto de Crédito Territorial archive, Caja de Vivienda Popular archive and CINVARC.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid. My emphasis.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. See also Declaración de los señores Laureano Gómez y Alberto Lleras Camargo sobre la política Colombiana hecha en Benidron, Spain, July 24, 1956, despacho señor presidente, PA.

president of the National Front urged Colombia's professionals to engage in "closing the abyss between a small enriched social class and a great mass of an impoverished class." In so doing, their "concerns, preoccupations and passions" as professionals should be aimed, above all, towards "harmonizing the social relations between these two classes...their mutual understanding, their peaceful coexistence."<sup>219</sup>

Consequently, the imperatives of the middle-class governing project targeted, on the one hand, the laboring classes, who were in need of orientation to become aware of their own human potential to live in democracy, and, on the other, and equally importantly, the oligarchs, who were in urgent need of guidance to be able to connect themselves socially to the problems of the nation. In the process, Lleras Camargo assured the Colombian professionals, it would be possible to instill social solidarity, social equilibrium, humanness, mutual class understanding and negotiation among different interests. Only then, he concluded, could the nation become a "sterile ground" on which "dictatorship and violence" could not survive.<sup>220</sup> As Lleras Camargo, presumably following the advice of Fals Borda and Le Bret, eloquently put it in 1959,

...We need a new generation of professionals committed to the nation. Every Colombian must serve in efficient cooperation with the great enterprise of the reconquering the dignity of life, peace and democracy... If La Violencia has

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<sup>219</sup> Public Letter from Alberto Lleras Camargo to the Professionals of Colombia, Despacho Señor Presidente, Comité de Relaciones Labores, February, 15, 1959. Exchange between Alberto Lleras Camargo, J.L. Le Bret and Orlando Fals Borda, Despacho Señor Presidente, Comité de Relaciones Labores, 1958-1960, PA; Orlando Fals-Borda Archive. See also, "The Restoration," *Time*, December 16, 1957, 23; "Plan to end a Civil War: Government by Both Sides," *US News & World Report*, December 20, 1957, 75.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. For example, in the meeting of national minister it was constantly argued for the creation of a "ruling class between the cultured class and the popular masses who do not have any basic education...a leading class well prepared to assimilate and put in practice on the environment the ideas and the initiatives that are dictated from above." See Consejo de ministros, acta 38, 2 de mayo de 1959. 1958-1959, tomo 41, 374-375, PA.

brought 200,000 dead per year...it is still more important to know what we are going to do with the 400,000 new people that remain alive...*We know it is harder to live in a stage of violence and we have just done that...so it is not difficult to see how we can coexist peacefully with one another...*your job is exceptional...exceptional in the sense that it can make the difference between a democratic future and a dictatorial one... [exceptional] because it can make the difference between violence and peace. There is a satisfactory solution for all the problems we suffer...to give the humanity of the fatherland a new birth by saving society from falling deeper into an abyss that is currently opening the gap between the few who act against the interests of Colombia and the many who are becoming poorer each passing day. What better way than making a peaceful dialogue possible between the few and the many?...what better way for you to work for your nation?<sup>221</sup>

Rather than try to measure up the incongruence between an assumed ideal and a purported practice or evaluate whether these professionals remained within the boundaries of the assignment given to this political ideal, I want to interrogate how these discourses became paramount to the (re)definitions of their very subjectivities as middle class.<sup>222</sup> More importantly, I want to question how through very process of constituting themselves as middle class, these professionals mobilized those very political class assignments as “best governors” to assemble their *own* project of class and gender rule—a project that sought to materialize what I refer to as *professional democracy*.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid. My emphasis. Elsewhere Lleras Camargo also said that “Colombians can not pacify their struggles in the political sphere just to let the possibility of a war of economic and social classes, that nobody wishes, but not too many people know how to avoid it.” See Lleras Camargo. *El trabajo y las relaciones sociales*, 204-206. See also Fals Borda, conference in 1960

<sup>222</sup> Barbara Weinstein, for example, argues that in the Brazilian case these professionals “remained within the boundaries of acceptable activity and sometimes drew those boundaries even more narrowly than their industrialist employers.” See Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace. Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in Sao Paulo, 1920-1984* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 334. At the very least, the Colombian case offers a distinct historical process. As it will become apparent, during the 1960s professionals attempted to offer their own notion of how progress, democracy and social peace should work. But I also think, as argued in the introduction, we have a tendency to ask whether these professional did or did not support other projects, forgetting to see if in the very process they envision one of their own. See also Owensby, *Intimate Ironies*.

## What Is the Class Assignment for Today?

Despite, or perhaps because of, the capillary class and gender selection, as well as the intimate training on the analytics of rule, these professionals were continuously debating over who was prepared for the political class assignments of discovering the “human capital and potential of the nation” and how this should take place so that henceforth different class interests could coexist democratically and peacefully

Excited to leave “the books behind” and encounter those who needed their guidance, Fernando Agudelo, for instance, recalled how this period was a very important moment for him as much as it was for the nation. He, along with numerous professionals, was convinced that they were “merely doing [their] job” by creating the necessary social and political conditions for finally bringing democracy. This was a political class assignment, however, that was to be achieved only by a “select few” who had the preparation and capacity to do so. Furthermore, Agudelo anxiously remembered, it was clear that there was nobody else available to do this job.<sup>223</sup> Because this task was clearly to be achieved by a select few, the very *classification* of who could belong to professional middle class that would advance the materialization of a professional democracy was sharply debated. While echoing transnational discourses on the importance of a professional middle class for democracy to flourish, professional men and women argued that a professional middle class had to undergo an “overwhelming democratic change.”<sup>224</sup> Specifically

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<sup>223</sup> Fernando Agudelo, interviewed by author, Bogotá, Colombia, March 2005, tape recording; See also field notes, c 1962, Fernando Agudelo Personal Archive (hereafter, FAPAR).

<sup>224</sup> Field notes, c 1962, FAPAR.

using ideas they were trained in, these professionals wanted to be different from earlier generation, since such “ancient professionals” had for so long been imbued within a set of biased assumptions and rigid social attitudes toward the laboring classes. These ancient professionals, as they were called, had only employed a patronizing relationship that obligated the peasants and working families to passively follow the dictum of the “remote and foreign experts.”<sup>225</sup> These ancient professional, furthermore, were merely “redeemers of the masses” who only perpetuated a class stereotype of the popular classes as “backward, recalcitrant, stagnant, inactive, ignorant, with strong tendencies toward violence, untouched by democratic principles and, therefore, resistant to change.”<sup>226</sup>

These class stereotypes, argued those who considered themselves new democratic professionals, were precisely the result of limited “scientific concern.” Until now, these new professionals wrote in their notes during training workshops, the laboring classes had been hidden in complicated statistics, dry reports and specialized studies. These ancient professionals, furthermore, were assumed to be following “feminine behaviors,” since they were merely stuck in their offices, glued to their desks, and, above all, unmasculinely afraid to face the “social reality of the nation.” As such, it was argued, these ancient professional could only have “classist [*clasista*] stereotypes” because they had neither knowledge nor real experience—that

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid; See also reportes de trabajo de campo (1961-1962), sección: investigaciones, serie: departamento de planes e investigaciones, fondo: subgerencia técnica, Instituto de Crédito Territorial Archive (hereafter, ICTA).

<sup>226</sup> Reportes de trabajo de campo (1961-1964), sección: arquitectura y urbanismo, serie: departamento de proyectos, fondo: subgerencia técnica, Caja de Vivienda Popular Archive (hereafter CVPAR. And personal archives.



is, male authority—to speak on the conditions and realities of the laboring classes. Cowards hiding behind their desks, these unmanly professionals could only see those laboring classes as living “in darkness, in economic hopelessness, in passivity...in the margins of the Colombian nation...with no agency [*protagonismo*] of their own...and bound to be miserable.”<sup>227</sup> These professionals were concerned only with social status and prestige, and they wanted to reify a “social patronizing” by promoting the “passivity of the peasants and workers.” These ancient professionals, moreover, were not manly enough to abandon their “professional privileges...the conformity of who they were, and their lucrative career,” to merely work “on behalf of the poor.”<sup>228</sup>

Other professionals, however, begged to differ. To some of them, it was counterproductive to rely only on the experience with the “real realities of the nation.”<sup>229</sup> Those who saw themselves as already democratic were feminized precisely because they could not embody the very masculine ability—that is, the authority—to know and stand apart from the “real realities of the nation” in order to master them. Furthermore, these new and democratic professionals could become “too attached” to the laboring classes and hence lose one of the main (masculine)

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid. In future writing I plan to elaborate how these class formations were in struggle with those constructed by white-collar workers and bank employees. Archival research suggests that these white-collar workers fought over the meanings of the middle class with state professionals during the early 1960s. In fact, bank employees became very active in consolidating a project as middle-class men.

<sup>228</sup> See also reportes de trabajo de campo (1959-1962), sección: investigaciones, serie: departamento de planes e investigaciones, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTA; Reportes de trabajo de campo (1961), sección: arquitectura y urbanismo, serie: departamento de proyectos, fondo: subgerencia técnica, CVPAR. In the next chapter I further elaborate these class discussions as a central element in the political consolidation a middle-class democracy.

<sup>229</sup> Informes de trabajo comunitario (1957-1959), sección: investigaciones, serie: departamento de planes e investigaciones, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTA

qualities of being a middle-class professional: the “objectivity” to educate themselves and others in the conditions needed for democracy and peace to flourish.

Once again, during the late 1950s and 1960s several professionals called upon their class colleagues to get out of the office—that is to say, to become truly middle-class professional men—and set out themselves to prepare both the oligarchs and the laboring classes to experience democracy. And if during the 1940s and part of the 1950s the office was the quintessential place associated with the formation of a middle class, in contrast with the factory, now this association, among professionals at least, became a questionable source of class and gender identification.<sup>230</sup>

Furthermore, a professional “passively using a pen behind a desk” could, it was constantly argued, neither prepare nor discover the human capital of every member of the society precisely because it was necessary to (masculinely) “*penetrate* into the nature of those at the top [as well]... as those at the bottom.”<sup>231</sup> It was impossible to prepare the “national humanity” to live in democracy from the distance of a “cold ...passive...unengaged desk professionalism [*profesionalismo de escritorio*].”<sup>232</sup> As several professionals wrote during the 1950s and 1960s,

Too many professionals prefer to feel at home in the quietness of the office...to hide their cowardice and professional ineptness behind a desk...they are in theory committed to the problems of the nation...the reality of the nation only

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<sup>230</sup> See my forthcoming article “It is not something you can be or come to be overnight”: Empleados, Mujeres de Oficina and Gendered Middle Class Identities in Bogotá, Colombia, 1930-1950,” in David Parker and Louise Walker (eds) *An Anthology on the Latin American Middle Class* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, forthcoming, 2008).

<sup>231</sup> Reportes de trabajo de campo/tarjetas sociales de información pertinente a los programas desarrollados en áreas urbanas de la capital de la nación (1961-1962), sección: investigaciones, serie: departamento de planes e investigaciones, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTA; Reportes de trabajo de campo (1961), sección: arquitectura y urbanismo, serie: departamento de proyectos, fondo: subgerencia técnica, CVPAR. My emphasis.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

appear in their dry statistics... They are conformist professionals that prefer to be agents of conservation [rather than agents of democratic change].<sup>233</sup>

In stark contrast, these new middle-class professionals would do their job in a manly fashion by becoming democratic professionals. Endlessly arguing against an ancient professional defined as anti-democratic and feminine, this new class of professional would begin its political assignment to materialize a professional democracy by removing some “historical stereotypes” about the laboring classes. During the late 1950s and 1960s, several professionals argued that it was impossible to continue looking at the peasants and the laboring classes as either “impermeable or unfit for progress, modernity and democracy” or as “shameful, passive... violent, incurable people who deserved their social position.” The only way to overcome those class stereotypes was to recognize that *within* the laboring classes there was a “great potential and latent human talent” that could actively participate in the process of democratic self-improvement.<sup>234</sup> In contrast to those ancient professionals, these new and democratic ones would go—in “flesh and blood”—to learn *along* with the laboring classes, and so, on the one hand, discover the human capital of the poor, and on the other, concretize, rather than alienate, that human capital as a central component of a professional democracy.<sup>235</sup> Challenging those ancient professional for who the peasants and the working classes were “foreign terrain [*terreno ajeno*],”

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<sup>233</sup> Informes sociales de trabajo de campo pertinente a los programas varios llevados acabo por el personal del instituto en áreas rurales aledañas a la capital de la nación (1963-1965), sección: investigaciones, serie: departamento de planes e investigaciones, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTA.

<sup>234</sup> Informes sociales de trabajo de campo pertinente a los programas varios llevados acabo por el personal del instituto en áreas rurales aledañas a la capital de la nación (1959-1961), sección: investigaciones, serie: departamento de planes e investigaciones, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTA.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

these middle-class professionals would include the “human capabilities...the social agency of the laboring classes” so that the poor, the peasants, and the working families could participate in their own process of democratic self-improvement. Furthermore, by taking into account the very social agency of the lower classes and making it productive for the nation, professionals could indeed orient, rather than impose, those groups toward the political enjoyment of the “pleasures of democracy.”<sup>236</sup>

Interestingly, professionals also thought that to create a professional democracy, it was equally imperative that they could, in their effort to become middle-class men and women, “change minds, sentiments [and] transform the human values of those who [were] at the summit of the society.”<sup>237</sup> Deploying the transnational discourses on the importance of the middle class as a democratic force, they endeavored to cultivate the human capabilities of the rich in order to develop their potential democratic sensibilities. And if the first democratic political assignment for professionals was to remove those ancient stereotypes from the society, it was likewise essential to persuade those who were “cultured by tradition” to detach themselves from “classist thoughts” and reject “classist sentiments.”<sup>238</sup>

Throughout late 1950s and 1960s, this was a crucial political project, I maintain, that professionals wanted to materialize in the very process of becoming

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid; see also tarjetas sociales, carpeta: material oficinas estatales de Colombia (1957-1961), programas y notas de campo, CINVAR.

<sup>237</sup> Material de entrenamiento utilizado en oficinas industriales, 1963, sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, Instituto de Fomento Industrial Archive (hereafter IFIAR).

<sup>238</sup> Ibid; See also clases sociales, carpeta: material oficinas estatales de Colombia (1957-1961), programas y notas de campo, CINVAR.

middle-class women and middle-class men. Although constituted by transnational discourses on the importance of the middle class as best governors in democracies, this political project was never determined by those discourses and rationalities. Always in the making and the subject of endless contestation, furthermore, these professional attempted to structure a professional democracy through which both oligarchic and laboring classes could use their human potential, class capabilities and democratic sensibilities to construct what they thought was most needed in order to overcome the causes and consequences of La Violencia: “a peaceful and stable class coexistence [*convivencia de clases*].”<sup>239</sup> This political project tried to guide the laboring classes to deploy their inherent human resources to become masculine, autonomous, independent members of the society that could participate, and meaningful experience, democracy. At the same time, this political project to democratize the oligarchs so that they could transform their class dispositions toward society and the nation.

### **Making the Oligarchies into Affective Elites**

Education is used to train members of a class and to divide them from other men as surely as from their own passions.<sup>240</sup>

The discourses, political rationalities and imperial practices that hierarchically positioned a professional middle class at the center of the creation of stable democracies enabled those professionals to play a very important role in educating the oligarchs about the basics of democratic rule. Some historians would

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<sup>239</sup> La importancia del trabajo profesional en la sociedad contemporánea carpeta: material de oficinas estatales y programas conjuntos del centro y otras dependencias gubernamentales de Colombia (1957-1961), CINVAR.

<sup>240</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 137.

quickly object that I am perhaps naively ignoring how power works in society, as it is impossible to argue that the middle class could be educating the oligarchy precisely because the former had less power than the latter. These objections work within a shared framework through which class rule is understood to be fixed and omnipotent in society. Understanding power as a commodity to own, rather than to practice, this historical reasoning assumed a class rule composed of discrete entities occupying their respective fixed location in an economy of power. This historical reasoning, I argue, limits us to denouncing this omnipotent class hierarchy without historically explaining the conditions through which it emerged. My argument is not just to say that the middle class had more power than the oligarchs. Rather, I want to interrogate how several class rules could coexist uneasily, in struggle, in the same historical contexts. More specifically, I want to question how class hierarchies were contested and constituted as political projects in constant formation. I attempt to demonstrate how, as a part of an attempt to create a professional democracy, professionals sought to construct class hierarchies—usually taking place not through a well-planned, precise, and all encompassing endeavor, but rather through a fuzzier, disjoint and certainly paradoxical, political campaigns.<sup>241</sup>

As explained in chapter 1, throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, and certainly with the inauguration of the Alliance for Progress during the last years of the Lleras Camargo administration, professional men and women became involved in both state and private programs to support the modernization of several industrial concerns throughout the country. The Instituto de Fomento Industrial (IFI), a state financial

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<sup>241</sup> And as it became clear in the next chapter, there were several political campaigns to create class rule.

corporation founded in the 1940s, intensified its social policies to “industrialize the nation.”<sup>242</sup> When this political agenda was put in place in the late 1950s, this state financial corporation began to promote professional consultation on human relations and scientific management as a means to democratize capital and labor relationships. By putting specific policies of the National Front into operation, IFI’s professional consultations sought to create the necessary conditions for an integrated and peaceful coexistence between capitalist and workers so that an expanded industrial production and increased productivity could be at the center of the creation of democracy.<sup>243</sup> Working closely with the ICT, the Ministry of Labor, the ESAP, the Cafeteros, and the OAS Committee on Labor Matters (as part of the Alliance for Progress), the IFI established a large—albeit disjointed—program to reach out “those who rule...those who rule in factories and [had] no social contact with national life.”<sup>244</sup> In a similar vein, during the late 1950s and 1960s, the national office of community development attached to the presidency, the Ministry of Agriculture, CINVA, the ICT and Cafeteros jointly developed sporadic programs in Bogotá and surrounding areas to reach out those who were considered to be at the top of the society—that is to say, those who were commonly categorized as “industrialists, presidents of companies, national leaders, high level bureaucrats, managers and administrators factory owners,

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<sup>242</sup> Minutas de encuentros de la Junta directiva, February, 15, 1959, 2-3, sección: Gerencia General, IFAR.

<sup>243</sup> Certainly, these projects were not as organized as those occurring in Brazil. This does not mean, however, that were not important. See Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace*.

<sup>244</sup> Notas de encuentros de la Junta directiva, February, 15, 1959, 2-3, sección: Gerencia General, IFAR.

entrepreneurs, businessman and bosses.”<sup>245</sup> It is in this process that some engineers, educators, psychologists, social workers, home economists, industrial hygienists, nurses, doctors and architects began to get in touch with those who they considered were “those who rule [*Los que mandan*].”<sup>246</sup>

And it was, indeed, a crucial project these professionals put forward to materialize a professional democracy, and equally important, to perform as middle-class women and men. In fact, the very possibility of achieving such a difficult yet democratically crucial political assignment was sharply debated among those professionals. During the first half of the 1960s, some of them argued that, although they were very much willing to undertake this class assignment, it was doubtful that oligarchs could change themselves, since they were “still living in a nineteenth century situation.”<sup>247</sup> As a consequence, several professional men and women argued, these oligarchs were only willing to perpetuate “political party sectarianism, bossism, corruption,” and in doing so, avoid any process of democratization. These oligarchs were “just happy living in their own nineteenth century world.”<sup>248</sup>

Some other professionals went even further in their reports and sketchy field notes to say that the renewal of oligarchic collective was difficult, if not impossible,

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid. Although it is clear how, by comparison, there much less archival material to trace this class education/ encounter between those elites and middle-class professionals, what is available suggest the different forces at work while these eternal encountering were happening. Indeed, I want to see how this archival material (incomplete reports, tabulated interviews, and sketchy filed notes) was not only an transparent evidence—or the lack of thereof— of the middle class experiences, but rather, and perhaps more importantly, the very ground through which these professional could envision the constitution of their political project as a middle-class professionals.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Informes de material de trabajo en fábricas aledañas a la ciudad de Bogotá (1963-1965), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.



because these oligarchs were not only living in a nineteenth-century situation but also were turning that situation into the problem of the twentieth century—that is to say, they were trying to perpetuate their nineteen-century condition, their backward behaviors and their old-fashioned political practices by keeping themselves “behind the nation...and away from the democratic society of the twentieth century.”<sup>249</sup> Because of this, professionals contended, these oligarchs could not be made to realize “the democratic change of Colombia.” Anti-modern, backward and old-fashioned, these oligarchs still were haunted by a recent past of violence which simultaneously allowed them to be “passive, ignorant, [and] evasive” when the (democratic) future of the nation was at stake. Indeed, these oligarchs, rather than promoters of progress and democracy, were becoming the “major obstacle in the development of the nation,” because they were still “locked away in their elitist ivory tower...untouched by the problems of the nation.” As a result, several professionals insisted that, up to that point in Colombian history the oligarchs had been “ignorant and mentally underdeveloped,” as they neither knew nor have affective dispositions toward “those who were outside their ivory tower.” Importantly, these oligarchs had remained feminine precisely because, historically, they had been oblivious, unmindful, unaware, insensitive and indifferent members of a nation who could only act and feel “within the walls of their home,” and so they were forgetting their *active* masculine role in development, progress and democracy. La Violencia, several professional argued, would have not happened if the oligarchs had possessed an ethos of “feelings and affections.”<sup>250</sup> In short, isolated from the nation and detached

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

from society, oligarchs had lived in a backward stage of ignorance concerning the real needs of the people, and they lacked proper sentiments toward the nation.

Other professionals, however, begged to differ. Although they agreed that the oligarchy played a passive, anachronistic and feminine role, the problem was that these oligarchs did indeed develop sentiments—but of “disregard, hostility, aggressiveness and disdain” for those who live outside their ivory tower. La Violencia, had, in fact, happened precisely because the oligarchs had been nurtured with feelings of “social hatred feelings... and fed from the milk [*amamantados*] of disgust for other members of the nation” and had been “kissed by senseless class prejudices toward the nation they belong[ed].”<sup>251</sup> Furthermore, the oligarch’s families had been raised with improper sentiments of “revenge, retaliation, repulsion and intolerance” that had put the history of the Colombia nation in a permanently confrontational situation, where those at the top lived only for “an autocratic passion, abhorrent feelings and egoistical emotion toward those below in society.” Those inappropriate sentiments cultivated at the core of the “oligarch’s anachronistic ethos and spirit” had not allowed them, several professional concluded, to consider the possibilities of creating a society in which “all the sons of the nation could live politely and peacefully.”<sup>252</sup>

Whether the problem was a lack of sentiments or else an overexpression of inappropriate and anachronistic sentiments, professionals thought that these were the

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<sup>251</sup> Informes de visitas profesionales a lugares de trabajo en varias industrias del sector automotriz en Bogotá (1961-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

problems that needed to be transformed among the oligarchy. It was their imperative to modernize and democratize these oligarchs by transforming them into a proper elite that could appropriately be integrated into the nation and belong to “a democracy of the twentieth century.” To accomplish such difficult democratic assignment, the professional middle class needed not to distance themselves from those who were categorized as “those who rule” but rather, and perhaps more importantly, to “root themselves [*enraizarse*] in their social situation.”<sup>253</sup>

Certainly, professional accounts of their jobs do not offer direct evidence of past behavior but rather are mediated narratives for understanding how these men and women experienced their class and gender encounters with those who were in dire need of democratic education. By remembering their experiences, they engaged in a struggle over the practices of what it meant to belong to the political project of middle-class rule and the practices this entailed. Such remembering was classed as much as gendered.<sup>254</sup> Alicia Perdomo, a social worker, for instance, recalled how in 1962 she embarked on a visit to high-level directorship of a private corporation located in Bogotá.<sup>255</sup> Although she was excited about this political class assignment, she recalled that she was clearly unsure what she would encounter—a “despot

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid. See also CINVA, Minister of Agriculture, ICA.

<sup>254</sup> See Daniel James, *Doña María's Story. Life, History, Memory and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Steve Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>255</sup> Alicia Perdomo, interview with the author, November, 2004. See also Informes de material de trabajo en corporación de ferias y exposiciones (1963-1965), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

entrepreneur or a nice boss willing to listen to [her].”<sup>256</sup> She was nervous, she recalled, because she was approaching “a group of people” she had never had the opportunity to face. Furthermore, she argued, one could learn from somebody in theory, but it was quite different to “experience their everyday life.” As she elaborated in our conversation,

You do not know what would you get...a nice boss...a boor [*patán*]...it was always complicated, you never knew if a despot entrepreneur or nice boss could be in your way...a despot entrepreneur not even looking at you or a nice boss willing to listening to you...I believe that the truth of the matter was that until you met them you could actually say who they were, not before...because we heard about them, what they did and what they did not do...but you had to meet them to see how they were and even after you met them...I mean, well, sometimes at the beginning they could be nice and all of that but then they were boorish and did not want to listen to you. So I did not know what I was getting myself into...<sup>257</sup>

Although this professional uncertainty was clear, she was nevertheless excited about undertaking the challenge because, she recalled,

It was a very important for me...To be a professional...to go and speak with these men on equal terms [*de tu a tu*] and feel of some importance for the future of the nation...we had La Violencia right around the corner and we all knew that we had to get over that, so we felt we were really important. And that was important for me because not too many women could have done this job. It was demanding...but the challenge was welcome because we were playing an important role for the society in general.<sup>258</sup>

In order to demonstrate how important this role was for her, as much as for the “society in general,” Perdomo appealed to her rather disorganized archive as a way to authorize her version of the past. She drew upon her extensive field notes and teaching plans to argue that what she performed was, above all, “invaluable...but

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<sup>256</sup> Alicia Perdomo, interview with author, November, 2004.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

unrecognized job.”<sup>259</sup> Furthermore, she complained that now nobody recognized or valued what she did. And precisely because of that, she needed to read out loud what she found the most important part of her job: “to sensitize [*sensibilizar*] and raise the consciousness [*conscientizar*] of the Colombian privileged classes”<sup>260</sup> Moreover, Perdomo concluded, it was necessary to guide those privileged classes on how to be compassionate toward the social problems of the Colombian society.

Professionals narrated similar preoccupations in their field notes and teaching plans as the very ground through which they could authorize their job as middle-class women and men. In 1961, Marta Gallegos, another social worker, for instance, highlighted how such an important political assignment could be performed. If the task was to transform the oligarchs into elites, argued Gallegos, the oligarchs should not be left to their own devices, since they had been on their own throughout Colombian history. On the contrary, Gallegos was convinced that it was crucial to appreciate what they could potentially do for the nation and to recognize that their “cultured tradition” gave them a “human element” that could be put the service of progress, development and democracy.<sup>261</sup> In so doing, it was possible, outlined Gallegos, to immerse herself in what the oligarchies desired, their “class universe,” their personal life experience, their family settings, their interests, and, hence, promote a transformation of their sentiments and thoughts according to their own social condition. By immersing herself in their “class ethos,” furthermore, Gallegos

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<sup>259</sup> Alicia Perdomo, field notes, c1960, Alicia Perdomo personal archive (hereafter APARC)

<sup>260</sup> Ibid; Also Alicia Perdomo interview with the author.

<sup>261</sup> Informes de trabajadoras sociales que participan en las actividades profesionales del instituto en materia de industrias en la ciudad de Bogotá (1961-1965), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

thought she could persuade oligarchs to struggle against their own social isolation and thus move toward a “stronger desire” to understand, have compassion for, the social problems of the nation.<sup>262</sup>

These professional women and men were engaged, I maintain, in a *sentimental education* of the oligarchies usually concretized in lectures, presentations, professional consultations, conferences and talks. This was a crucial and endless political project of rule that attempted to elevate these assumed “backward... anachronistic... feminine oligarchs” into *affective*, and presumably masculine, elites who could, above all, be sentimentally engaged with the problems of the nation and the social situation of the laboring classes. In this sentimental education, professional men and women attempted to educate these oligarchs in specific sensibilities that were fitting for progress, in aspirations that were appropriate for democracy and dispositions that were suited for social peace so they. In doing so, the oligarchs could become an integrated part of the nation—indeed true elites leading the path of the nation into progress and development. As an industrial engineer eloquently wrote in his unsigned report (which was probably as a response to a positive job evaluation made by the Department of Special Studies at IFI in 1963),

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid. Although promoted as a drastically different from the years of the dictatorship, these preoccupations to educate the oligarchs socially were in motion since the mid 1950s. Maria Cartago, using similar language and political arguments, narrates in her numerous reports as well as field notes how she was unsure who these influential people were. She was certain, however, how important it was not to “ignore these social groups” if “the democracy of the nation” was to be developed. As point of departure, she wrote, it was necessary to discover the very nature of elites thus a truly process of realization could potentially take place. It was imperative, furthermore, to know how they, the elites, operated, what they wanted, what their interest and ideas of life were, what they thought, what they felt about their role in Colombian society. If the task was the “democracy of the nation,” argued Cartago, the social isolation of the elites had to be systematically combated by experiencing into the “very same social framework, class universe and social background” where they, the elites, were educated as much as by knowing the very “mind set... sentimental structure and cultural environment” See my paper, “*They are my Poor; Who are my Elites.*”

... I am certain what a professional job does. I am delighted to learn that they [presumably directors and presidents of a factory in Bogotá] have expressed satisfactions with what I have been doing. Together with them [the elites] we can make the workplace the best source to improve the relationship between workers and patronos...to humanize the relations between those on the factory floor and those in the director's industrial units... From the factory work there will be a family nation...my job is a national job [since] it is a way to see how those patronos, directors, entrepreneurs could feel more attracted to the lives of their workers... to sense their problems...to feel more involved...[Thus] I am sure that in a underdeveloped country like ours it is responsibility of the ruling classes' [*clases dirigentes*] to, once and for all, use their class ascendancy to dignify democracy rather than ignore it...to build a nation rather than destroy it...to light the way to a peaceful future rather than shadow it...to be the promoter of progress rather than the obstacle to it.<sup>263</sup>

### **Teaching Elites Dispositions for Social Peace**

It is through this classed and gendered sentimental education, I would argue, that professional men and women sought to put it in practice the very possibility of materializing a professional democracy—and in doing so, perform as middle-class men and middle-class women. Writing field notes, preparing lectures, and making presentations became the very ground—indeed the class methodology—through which these professionals attempted to educate those oligarchs who needed to be transformed into elites. In 1963, for instance, a group of social workers, nurses, and home economists working with the IFI and participating in CINVA and ICT professional workshops, began a series of talks and professional consultations on the topic of human relations in several factories located in Bogotá. These professional women were excited about the opportunity to work for these “democratic programs,” because, one office memorandum suggests, the patronos and directors of these

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<sup>263</sup> Evaluaciones e informes de personal (1963-1965), sección: departamento de personal, fondo: subgerencia administrativa, IFIAR.

factories eagerly requested “professional assistance.”<sup>264</sup> Although Alicia Perdomo did not work for the aforementioned program, she remembered how it was crucial to prepare for such “professional visits.” For her the “first impression was what really counted.” It was necessary, she recalled, to dress according to the situation so they, as professionals, could cause a positive impact on those who were supposed to be listening. She remembered,

Well, you know, we thought...we were sure and most of the time actually things went better when we dressed according to the situation. First impression gave us the possibility to build long and sustainable relationship so we needed to dress professionally...We were not just going to the factory floor; we were going to talk with the patronos and directors of factories and companies, so we could not just go there suggesting you did not know your profession. We had to be certain of what we were doing, and the way your dressed was a good sign of professionalism so they would listen to us.<sup>265</sup>

After taking care of how to dress professionally, it seemed, these social workers and nurses participated in several professional visits to carry out social surveys as a way to grasp a general idea about the interests and desires of these “bosses and owners.” Specifically, these professionals wanted to evaluate how motivated, socially and sentimentally, these patronos were to actively participate in these programs. Deploying discourses on human relations, furthermore, these social workers sought to know, above all, how these patronos felt about their “brothers and

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<sup>264</sup> Informes de material de trabajo en fábricas aledañas a la ciudad de Bogotá (1963-1965), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR; See also: Evaluaciones e informes de personal (1963-1965), sección: departamento de personal, fondo: subgerencia administrativa, IFIAR.

<sup>265</sup> Alicia Perdomo, Interview with author, November, 2004.



sisters of the lower classes.”<sup>266</sup> When considering how to do this, these professionals needed to prepare surveys that were neither too specific which would “hurt some [class] feelings” nor too general which would disengage those patronos from answering the questions. In doing so, the social workers advised respondents there was not a right or wrong answer. Rather, those patronos should answer what they felt it was correct and not what professionals wanted to read. In a similar vein, professionals also worried about the language and class meanings of these social questionnaires. Although there are several and similar versions of these surveys available, a quick comparison reveals that in earlier draft the word patrono was common to refer to those who were target to fill out the questionnaires. In contrast, late drafts, and presumably the last version, patrono quickly became replaced by a more “attractive language”—*hombres de empresa*. Always wary not to produce class hard feelings, using language that could resonate in those who were supposed to be educated, professionals discussed why, instead of patrono, *hombres de empresa* was more arresting and appealing language to use in social surveys. For some, patrono could represent “violence, tradition [even] machismo” as it condensed the necessary confrontational attitude against those who were “working on the factory floor.”<sup>267</sup> By comparison, *hombres de empresa*, it was argued, pointed toward a peaceful man who could work along with the workers and, as a truly leader, set the examples for them to reach development and progress. After discussing the form and the content of the social survey, these professional expected to learn what these patrons—or rather,

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<sup>266</sup> Informes de material de trabajo en fábricas aledañas a la ciudad de Bogotá (1963-1965), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR; Evaluaciones e informes de personal (1963-1965), sección: departamento de personal, fondo: subgerencia administrativa, IFIAR.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

hombres de empresa—really thought about themselves and the feelings they had toward others members of society.<sup>268</sup> Through much class contemplation and debate, they produced a final version of a social questionnaire in 1963 that used varied forms of responses to measure respondents positions between two extreme of belief. It reads,

Is it a good thing for a hombre de empresa to think that the laboring classes are able to improve their conditions by themselves,

Yes, I agree

Yes, I agree partially

No, I do not agree.

Is it a good thing for a hombre de empresa to believe that he needs to know about his workers?

Yes, I agree

Yes, I agree partially

No, I do not agree

Which of the following assertion do you think is correct?

1. Men must be at the service of the machine
2. The machine must be at the service of human men

Which of the following sentences would describe best the role of an hombre de empresa?

1. An hombre of empresa who is *amiguero*, *confianzado* and likes to favor those of his friends and is not really knowledgeable of his occupation. A hombre de empresa who likes to impose punishments and work as a prison guard
2. An hombre de empresa who is serious, hard worker, does not get married to anybody in the workplace. An hombre de empresa who teaches by example and provides the lines of action for responsible workers to follow. An hombre de empresa who teaches by doing.

What is the most fundamental preoccupation of a hombre de empresa?

1. The welfare of his men
2. The preservation and maintenance of the mechanical equipment

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

What of these assertions describe an hombre de empresa best

1. An hombre de empresa is someone who thinks that his interests are in total opposition to those of his workers, feels there is no need to get involved with his workers and is happy as long as the company is producing some profits.
2. An hombre de empresa is someone who thinks that his interests are compatible and negotiable with those of the workers, who want to know about his workers, who trusts them as the most important human capital of his industry, and who is willing to negotiate with his workers how to do business in the factory.<sup>269</sup>

As formulaic, naïve, and obvious as these surveys questions might seem to us now, I would argue, professionals took them quite seriously in thinking about who they were encountering. Moreover, these social questionnaires were not just hard evidence, as we easily tend to assume, of the situation of the hombres de empresa but also an active- political force that produce a *class effect*—that is to say, it provoked and authorized the dire need to provide sentimental education to that would transform patronos into affective elites.

Although it has proven impossible to find any statistical tabulation of this survey, those professional women who participated in these series of talks and consultations wrote social reports narrating their disappointments, anxieties, frustrations and surprise at how these so-called hombres de empresa could care less about “their workers [and] the development of the nation.” Indeed, the political content, as much as the form of these reports, were driven by these frustrations. These social workers and nurses argued that, presumably following the tabulations of the social questionnaires, the hombres de empresa overwhelmingly insisted that “workers

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid. See also encuestas sociales utilizadas en fábricas aledañas a la ciudad de Bogotá (1963-1965), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR; Evaluaciones e informes de personal (1963-1965), sección: departamento de personal, fondo: subgerencia administrativa, IFIAR.

did not think by themselves.”<sup>270</sup> Worse still, it was argued, they thought that “social problems...and conflicts” could be easily resolved with “small fixes...and good salaries.” If that was not enough, these professional women concluded, these *patronos*—not *hombres de empresa*—made it clear that “no human sentiment other than distrust and disregard existed in employers toward workers.” Furthermore, while working with those whom they considered oligarchs and *patrones*, professional women and men frequently felt frustrated and deceived because what they thought they knew they found they did not. According to them, it seems, those at the top were neither feeling nor doing what professionals expected them to do. Despite or precisely because of their intimate class preparation, professional women and men were annoyed with themselves for not knowing what to do “with those *patronos* who [did] not want to listen...with those who think they [knew] everything.” Some professionals complained about themselves because they felt they were not doing their job—“it was not working” they usually faulted themselves in their social reports. Along these objections, however, these professional men and women endlessly asked: “What sort of education could instill a national sense of belonging...a social sentiment for the greater good?”<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid. See also encuestas sociales utilizadas en fábricas aledañas a la ciudad de Bogotá (1963-1965), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR; Evaluaciones e informes de personal (1963-1965), sección: departamento de personal, fondo: subgerencia administrativa, IFIAR.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. See also encuestas sociales utilizadas en fábricas aledañas a la ciudad de Bogotá (1965-1966), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR; Evaluaciones e informes de personal (1963-1965), sección: departamento de personal, fondo: subgerencia administrativa, IFIAR. Here, I want to be clear, it is not just that in practice these professionals were unsuccessful in modernizing the elites. If we merely categorize the project as a failure, then, we could easily conclude that only if the middle-class professionals would have properly done their job, democracy and progress could have been rotted in the development of the Colombia nation. That is, simply put, to mimic what was being discussed during the 1960s. Both elites and middle-class professionals were operating in the same discourse field of rationalization and professionalization of social relationships as a way to, on the one hand, increase productivity, and to overcome the causes of

These frustrations, uncertainties with their class preparation and epistemological anxieties, however, became the very place to experience the possibility of being—and performing as—middle-class professionals. At stake, moreover, was the struggle about how and whose class rule should precedence in materializing democracy and peace. These professionals, I maintain, aspired not only to be distinguished from the oligarchs, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to educate those oligarchs into (masculine) elites as a way through which those professional could *remake* themselves as a central gendered class in the structuration of a professional democracy.<sup>272</sup>

Thus, these professionals engaged in endless strategies to convince and persuade those *hombres de empresa* or *patronos* how they had to prepare themselves to experience peace and democracy. Preparing talks, presentations, reports, and outlines became not just the evidence of, but the very technology for, rule, the means through which these professional attempted to educate, and indeed to govern, those oligarchs' ethos to become “the elites of a Colombian modern nation.” The way of making presentations, for instance, became quite crucial in the pedagogies of class persuasion. Most of the talks available followed an organization in which the professional men and women began by explaining the “the hard facts...what could not be questioned because [it was] scientifically and statistically beyond doubt.”

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La violencia, on the other—to, indeed, promote the much needed social peace and democracy. It is here, I would argue, where a history of Colombia elites becomes quite crucial. There is a seated historical method—one I would like to refer as Machiavellian a historical understanding of the elite. We need to move beyond this methodology to understand how these elite remake themselves by creating a project of class politics. Throughout this dissertation I merely hint at how some elites were trying to remake themselves. Needless to say, a more extensive, theoretical and historical study of the elite is largely undue.

<sup>272</sup> Not only a professional democracy. As it will become clear in the next chapter, they also put forward a middle-class democracy during the 1960s.

They then moved into descriptions of different social class conditions, and finally provided lengthy suggestions about how to approach particular social situations.<sup>273</sup> In the political content of these presentations, furthermore, these professionals wanted to demonstrate what the oligarchs did not “want to see...listen or feel: the social situation of the laboring classes.” They needed to explain to these *hombres de empresa* “how the peasants and their family live, how their workers worked, what they were able to do during and after working hours.”<sup>274</sup>

In 1963, for instance, Lilia Sanabria and María Eugenia Santana, professional nurses for IFI and ICT, were assigned to pursue a series of talks about labor and human relationships in a factory located in the south part of the city. The professionals found they needed to begin by establishing their authority and objectivity as truly and capable professionals. They reported telling the *hombres de empresa*,

...we are here merely to offer you a professional, objective, impartial advice on how to communicate with your workers...how to relate to them... Our professional experience, extensive preparation and our knowledge allows us to offer you an objective view of the social situation in your factory...the needs of your workers and the potential problems you may face. Our professional advice will help you assess a complete view of the situation and avoid any easy solutions that at the end would not follow any professional understanding...leading to deterioration of social peace, financial stability, and production on the factory floor and in the family of the nation.<sup>275</sup>

After establishing a necessary professional authority in front of the *hombres de empresa*, Santana and Sanabria were confident to explain, their teaching plans and

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<sup>273</sup> Informes profesionales a industrias del sector automotriz en Bogotá (1961-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR; See also CINVARC and ICT.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Informes de trabajo en industrias del sector automotriz en Bogotá (1961-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

report suggest, how the laboring classes were seen in society. As argued previously, professional usually thought that such presentations could not be so specific as to produce “hard feelings,” and by extension, to disengage these *hombres de empresa*. For this reason, Santana and Sanabria presented a story with a familiar trope: the doings of a “traditional *patrono*” and his teleological class transition into a “modern *hombre de empresa*” who could potentially transform himself into the promoter, rather than the limiter of, progress and democracy. Although the story takes place in a factory setting, Santana and Sanabria composed an abstract comparison narrating class characterizations they imagined these traditional *patrones* had to change in order to play a progressive role in society. In fact, the political content of the story was aimed at providing the “conceptions of the world” usually hidden within “*patrones*’ minds and spirits.”<sup>276</sup> In doing so, these professional attempted to contextualize these experience so these *patronos* could learn about themselves by comparing the story’s class descriptions and their experiences in real life as *patronos*.<sup>277</sup>

The traditional boss, Santana and Sanabria instructed those presumably potential *hombres de empresa*, was unaware of his important role in society did not have any sentimental attachment toward the “social problems of the peasants or workers,” since, above all, he did not want to know them intimately. Without expressing a truly masculine disposition, this traditional boss, Sanabria and Santana

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<sup>276</sup> Informes de trabajo en industrias del sector automotriz en Bogotá (1961-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR. Similar stories appear in reportes de trabajo de campo, visitas requeridas por varias industrias del sector metalúrgico en Bogotá y sus alrededores (1961-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR, Reports.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

wrote in their presentation's outline, had only "ancient stereotypes" about lower classes—"peasants, workers, the poor, the people." For him, the laboring classes were at best "objects of production," and at worst "beasts of burden [*animal de carga*], dirty, sick, malodorous, unable to take in what [was] new...and unable to leave their position as a serf of a demesne."<sup>278</sup> Living in a anachronistic past, this traditional oligarchic boss was "less than a man" precisely because, on the one hand, he did not want to leave "his social sphere...his privileged social bubble" and, on the other, "face the peasants and workers for what they really [were]." In all, this lesser man, with his unsentimental conceptions of the social world and lack of manly actions, cultivated a paternalistic relationship where neither the privileged nor the laboring classes could take any active role in the development of the nation because it only expanded the "chasm between the oligarchs and the laboring classes."<sup>279</sup>

In stark contrast, Santana and Sanabria lectured, the *hombre de empresa* was, above all, an "active man" willing to leave his privileged status for a moment in order to face peasants and workers for what they were capable of doing for the development of the nation. Fighting his feminine tendencies—that is, his embedded desire to isolate himself from the realities of the society—the *hombre de empresa* was willing to develop a "social spirit" and thus a position of sympathy for the role of the laboring classes in the nation's growth. In so doing, said the story taught by Santana and Sanabria, this *hombre de empresa* was eager to recognize how an "intimate relationship between those who work at the factory...cultivate the land and

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. Similar stories appear in reportes de trabajo de campo, visitas requeridas por varias industrias del sector metalúrgico en Bogotá y sus alrededores (1961-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR, Reports.



those who rule [*dirigen*]” was the condition for reaching a mutual goal: a peaceful democratic society where each social group had different responsibilities and roles. A society where, therefore, some had to “rule, while others cooperate.”<sup>280</sup>

In similar visits, other professionals also composed stories as a methodology to inculcate certain class dispositions toward the laboring classes. This newly self-transformed *hombre de empresa*, several professionals wrote in their teaching accounts, developed a democratic disposition by being willing to understand that neither peasants nor workers were the “serfs of a glebe...miserable and ignorant.” Rather, this *hombre de empresa* had a masculine disposition toward the active role of the laboring classes in reaching progress. Indeed, for this *hombre de empresa*, the laboring class were, above all, part of “the human capital of the nation.” The task of the potential elites was to discover and multiply that human capital so they, as part of the privileged classes, could place themselves in an “advanced place among the whole group of developed nations.”<sup>281</sup> Contrary to the unmanly traditional patron, for whom the workers and the peasants were just “ignorant and miserable,” the virile *hombre de empresa* knew—and felt—that, if human capital was to be multiplied, it was necessary to conceptualize and face “the members of the laboring classes as a total men” desiring to be part of progress and development.<sup>282</sup> In doing so, these professionals attempted to educate the *patronos* to develop a class disposition that could promote investment in, rather than the waste of, the human capital of the

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Reportes de trabajo de campo, visitas requeridas por varias industrias del sector metalúrgico en Bogotá y sus alrededores (1961-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR, Reports.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

peasants and workers as a means to achieve greater productivity and, by extension, social peace, political stability and democracy.

### **Changing the Hearts of Men and Educating the Male Sensitivity for Service**

And if the disposition to recognize the human capital of the laboring classes was critical to turning imagined feminine oligarchs into future virile elites, it was equally imperative to take advantage of the “oligarchy’s latent human capital.” Because they occupied a “superior rank in the nation,” several professional lectured, the oligarchs somehow owned an innate masculine authority that could be profitably utilized and celebrated to change their “oligarch ethos.”<sup>283</sup> In order to encourage the elites to play a critical role in progress, the professionals were to make use of their “superior authority as oligarchs ...their human values as leaders” at a means to instill what was most needed in the consolidation of a democracy: an active *sentiment*, *indeed a sensitivity, to serve* the larger interests of the nation and larger good of the society. The professionals saw themselves as becoming middle class by educating these partially effeminized male oligarchs—passive, insensitive, unconcerned, ignorant and mentally underdeveloped yet with a potential and male authority to be used—in totally masculine elite men who could serve the nation through social self-improvement. In so doing, the oligarchs themselves, with the guidance of the professionals, could turn their “feminine [and] traditional sentiments of hatred, and

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<sup>283</sup> Notas de campo, visitas requeridas por varias industrias en el sector de cementos (1959-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR, .Reports.

passion of societal indifference and disregard” into masculine and active sensibility for national service.<sup>284</sup>

In order to achieve such a difficult task, during the first half of the 1960s, professionals began using a teaching methodology that soon would become common in these class encounters. Having in mind that it was necessary to speak to these *patronos* according to their “class ascendancy,” professionals used popular sayings as quotation to provoke discussions among those who were supposed to be educated as true *hombres de empresa*. Through these discussions, furthermore, professionals expected these *patronos* bring up the truth about themselves, and in doing so, discovered their class ethos so they could change themselves into masculinised elites at the service of the nation.<sup>285</sup> In 1964, for instance, Carlota Montoya, a social worker trained in the National School of Social Work during the late 1950s and hired by IFI in 1962, found herself compelled to use a popular saying as an invitation for those *patrones* “to understand their own reality.”<sup>286</sup> Moreover, by discussing these quotations, she expected to have “some kind of impact on those heartless oligarchs.” She wanted to begin her presentation on February, 12, 1964, by discussing a very suggestive quotation: “*Ojos que no ven corazón que no siente*”—a saying that is

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Hojas de anotación, encuestas sociales y material vario utilizado en las industrias metalúrgica aledaña a la ciudad de Bogotá (1959-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR, Reports. See also, Notas de campo, visitas requeridas por varias industrias en el sector de cementos (1961-1964), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR, Reports.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid. See also: selección de personal, evaluaciones laborales (1962-1963), sección: departamento de personal, fondo: subgerencia administrativa, IFIAR.

figuratively used to mean “out of sight, out of mind,” but that more literally means “the heart does not feel what the eyes cannot see.”<sup>287</sup>

Although the detailed discussion of this quotation has proven impossible to find, her reports suggest that Carlota Montoya used this quotation, and the much-desired discussion about it, as a hopeful pedagogical technique to instill some social sensibility in the “rule of the upper classes.” Furthermore, following the assigned meaning of the quotation, Carlota envisioned that if these *patrones* or oligarchs were able to see the problems of the laboring classes, they could then develop some social sensibility to those very same social problems. And similarly, if these oligarchs were able to feel, they were able to see the problems of the laboring classes. As a result of these cyclical motions, Montoya further elaborated, the oligarchs would cultivate a sentiment to serve precisely because they would tend to be actively involved in the resolving “the gravest problems of the nation—social division among classes, social indifference, social disregard, mutual class misunderstanding and distrust” that only had produced “deadly confrontations.”<sup>288</sup> Once those sensibilities—defined as the capacity to understand and feel the problems of the laboring classes—were “under the command of those who rule,” these oligarchs could become the true elites of the nation who could lead the way, in a manly fashion, to both forget the “violent errors of the past and achieve social peace.”

Because a lot of political hope was put into those methodologies of rule, several professionals complained in their reports about the impossibility of achieving their class assignments. “Those directors, presidents of the company, and *patrones* or

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

*hombres de empresa*,” one wrote, “were willing neither to feel nor embrace their sentiment of national service.”<sup>289</sup> Again, these professional women were annoyed at themselves over their frustrated attempts to educate these *patronos* to play a national role. Indeed, while encountering and attempting to educate those *patronos*, class questions haunted this group of professional women:

What sort of education is necessary to instill a feeling of national service...a sense of...national belonging...a feeling that they are also part of the nation...an education that can make them feel integrated into the nation?...Why do they work against their nation, country, their society to which they belong?<sup>290</sup>

The oligarchs were neither developing a social sensibility toward the laboring classes nor recognizing a sentiment of national service, because in the midst of their “comfortable lives” they could not, above all, feel “what every other member of the society [felt].” Although they did receive some sentimental education at the hands of professionals, these oligarchs remained “locked in their privileged bubble”—that is to say, these oligarchs continued to be too feminine, since they only traveled from the “comfortable house to the solitary office desk.”<sup>291</sup>

These professionals’ frustrations and class anxieties, however, did not prevent such women to continue attempting to educate the oligarchs in the democratic role they should play in the nation. In fact, several professionals agreed that these problems were, above all, “the challenge of exercising the democratic

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<sup>289</sup> Notas de campo, visitas requeridas por varias industrias en el sector de cementos (1959-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid. See: Reportes de trabajo de campo, visitas requeridas por varias industrias del sector metalúrgico en Bogotá y sus alrededores (1961-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR, Reports. Informes de trabajo en industrias del sector automotriz en Bogotá (1961-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR. See CINVA.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

professions.” Although they always felt their class preparation was not enough and in need of improvement, they were also convinced that these democratic professions were becoming more important than ever, for they, given their class preparation, were the select few who could accomplish such difficult tasks.

Although they used similar teaching methodologies, professional women argued more forcefully that, above all, talks, lectures, consultations and professional visits should be dedicated to educate “the heart of those who rule.” Furthermore, “a change of heart” was imperative in those “unfeeling and uninterested men.”<sup>292</sup> These professional women hoped these stories, comparisons and examples could speak directly to the experiences of these leading classes and bring about a “change of their heart.”<sup>293</sup> This change, they insisted, demanded both compassion and social sensibility so that distrust, disregard and indifference would no longer cause a return to a epoch of violence. Helena Escobar, for instance, argued that the quotations and popular saying used as teaching tools were too indirect and proposed, instead, to use open questions along with stories that could make the *patronos* feel their role in the development of the nation. Although it is unclear if these questions and stories were ever presented in any factory, the proposed strategies were not unique. Escobar, a nurse and social worker trained in the School for Social Work and working for the IFI and who took several professional workshops sponsored by CAFETEROS and

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<sup>292</sup> Visitas de campo, visitas solicitadas por varias industrias del sector automotriz en Bogotá y sus alrededores (1961-1962), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

ICT, attempted to ask *patronos* directly what they were capable of doing—that is to say, “how much they would care to serve the nation.”<sup>294</sup>

Having in mind this concern, Escobar presumably planned to ask a very telling question: “what can you do in the ocean of poverty?”<sup>295</sup> And this was precisely the inquiry she developed through the organization and use of tropes in the stories she prepared to present in front of *patrones*. In these, she narrated the disposition and sensibility of two *hombres de empresa* when learning about the “unbearable situation of underdevelopment.” The brief story depicted how two *hombres de empresa* discovered not only certain “social problems in their own nation” but also the “chasm of class” between a “cultured group on one side and the rustic classes on the other.” Indeed, said the story presumably prepared by Escobar, these oligarchs realized how they were living “isolated within a nation.”<sup>296</sup> Although up to this point in the story, both *hombres de empresa* showed an “excitement to learn something new,” the dispositions and sensibilities toward the class discoveries were rather different. One failed to assume either responsibility for nor an active sensibility toward changing this situation of underdevelopment. Quite the contrary, wrote Escobar, he blamed the laboring classes for their own “deserved situation,” since they were “slaves of their own condition.” With no passion to serve society, much less a concern with the future of the nation, and in an act of “cowardly *machismo*,” the *hombre de empresa* was content to continue working for himself.

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<sup>294</sup> Informes de trabajo de campo y visitas empresariales en Bogotá, 1962, sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

This cowardly machismo, the story concluded, became the major obstacle for the integration of the society, since it expanded the gap between those at the top and those at the bottom. In the end, he was destined to live in isolation, concerned only about his material interests and ignoring the lives and welfare of the members in society.

In stark contrast, the other *hombre de empresa* was “touched” by the situation. At the outset, Escobar argued in her teaching story, this man proclaimed a “exemplary virile” sensibility: he was sure that “after feeling...[and ] knowing the situation...the laboring classes could not be indifferent to [him].”<sup>297</sup> And precisely because of this exemplary virile disposition, this *hombre de empresa* was ready to be, first, integrated into the society and, second, a man of service. Furthermore, this virile *hombre de empresa* was quite aware that by developing a sentiment of service he could position himself as a true man in society and play the role he should have played all along: “the superior elites of the nation dignifying the path to progress...illuminating the road to peace...and democracy.”<sup>298</sup> In contrast to machista who only expected servility, this *hombre de empresa* wanted to show some consideration and respect for those he was willing to serve. He even was willing to understand the “subaltern position of his inferiors” and treat them accordingly. Contrary to the machista *hombre de empresa* who was afraid to face his leadership position, showing a disposition of disregard, this *hombre de empresa*, concluded Escobar, was a virile leader that recognized that “superior men” were

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.



known by the sensibility they displayed toward their inferiors—indeed, “superior men [were] easily known by the way they treat their inferiors.”<sup>299</sup>

### **Cultivating Aspirations and Desires for Democracy**

Besides the education of the sensibility suited for progress and development, as well as suitable dispositions and attachments toward the laboring classes, professionals also attempted to educate the oligarchs in the appropriate aspirations and desires for democracy. During the late 1950s and 1960s, this class assignment became crucial in the endeavor of creating a professional democracy. By arguing that democratic education should take place according to the appropriate culture norms of each class, professionals argued that they needed to transform what they considered oligarchs’ “equivocal aspirations and doubtful desires” toward democracy.<sup>300</sup> That is to say, several professional women and men argued that the oligarchs had historically been nurtured with “materialistic desires and egoistical competitiveness.” Furthermore, these professionals maintained that “the oligarchic motto of life has always been to own more material objects only for personal satisfaction.”<sup>301</sup>

Thus, the class assignment, I would argue, consisted of emancipating these oligarchs away from their sentimental attachment to material artifacts. By using, rather than ignoring, their masculine aspirations “to be important...to be superior... [and] to be competitive,” these professionals were attempting to educate these

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Conferencias dictadas y consultas profesionales de fabricas de acero en el departamento de Boyaca (1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

oligarchs to become “socially driven men.” In 1963, for instance, Antonio Villegas, an architect working for IFI, prepared a conference to be given in front of the board of directors of a recently founded steel factory. The factory was largely sponsored by IFI, and there were several professional teams involved in the development of new programs of management and rational organization. As a member of these teams, Villegas was assigned to travel to Boyaca to give a series of conferences about “social solutions for progress and democracy.” Presumably, the employers requested IFI to provide several conferences—in fact, Villegas’ talk made references to earlier lectures given by other professionals. Villegas decided to discuss how Acerías Paz del Río, as a recently founded factory, should be an example of “class friendship and harmony.”<sup>302</sup> More specifically, he elaborated on what he referred to as employers’ equivocal (class) aspirations. Villegas, like many professionals, was concerned about the possibility of cultivating democratic aspirations in oligarchs’ ethos in order to prepare them to live in social harmony and political stability. As he noted in a letter to the Department of Special Studies at IFI some weeks prior he went to give the conference,

I will talk about the conduct and attitudes of a considerable part of our ruling classes ...about the cancerous influence of an egotistical and autocratic attitude of these classes toward peasants and workers. Perhaps it will not be too much to ask these ruling classes to abandon these attitudes of ignorance toward the social forces...perhaps it will not be too much to ask these ruling classes to think over their attitudes and conduct. Perhaps it will not be too much to ask these ruling classes to step back and reflect upon their interest and actions so that, in leading the society, they can create a country where our sons can live peacefully.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid. Although there were several planned conferences I have been able to locate only one that took place in early 1963.

<sup>303</sup> Letter from Antonio Villegas to Daniel Vaca, sección: departamento de estudios especiales, February 11, 1963, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

Villegas was deploying transnational discourses and National Front ideologies that sought to hierarchically position the middle-class professionals as advising the ruling classes on the basics of democracy. Thus, he went to the steel factory to talk about hope and peace precisely because, he cautioned at the outset, it would be socially masochistic to go into detail about La Violencia only to find no light for the “democratic path [that was] ahead of us.”<sup>304</sup> And precisely because he did not want to rely on a past of violence, Villegas’s main reference was to La Violencia as a tradition that still haunted the experiences of those ruling classes he was attempting to educate. Indeed, the ruling classes had to overcome this violent tradition in order to move into an anti-confrontational stage—a new society, he said, where “every member of the society can live harmoniously.”<sup>305</sup>

“Who wants to return to la Violencia?” he asked the employers of steel factory in Paz del Rio. This violence, Villegas elaborated, had occurred due to, above all, the lack of a “social friendship.”<sup>306</sup> According to Villegas, furthermore, this social friendship did not exist because those at the top of the society aspired to show their superiority by displaying “their ostentatiously material richness” in the face of the misery and poverty of those at the bottom of the society. Consequently, argued Villegas, those at the bottom of the society appeared, at best, as “factors of production” and, at worst, as “source of material profit.” In stark contrast to the period of La Violencia, Villegas envisioned a class friendship through which the

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<sup>304</sup> Conferencias dictadas y consultas profesionales en las fábricas de acero en el departamento de Boyaca (1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

hierarchical superiority of some men was not to be measured by “what one [had]” but, above all, by “what one did as a man.”

As a very important part of the middle-class political project, Villegas proposed that “those cultured by tradition” should understand and feel a “modern and progressive moment [had come] to the country.” The leading class should, he said in his letter to IFI, change their attitudes and create new social and democratic aspirations. If, Villegas lectured, in the past the ruling classes were driven by “sentimental aspiration to material objects and possessions...and egotistical profit,” it now could be possible to imagine a class friendship through which the potential democratic elites, as true men, could be distinguished by what they were capable of doing for the nation—that is, an “authentic aspiration for peace and democracy.”<sup>307</sup> And in order to do so, Villegas argued the oligarchs had to get away from the “oppression of the economy,” which had only mutilated “their pleasure in feeling what humans were capable of.”<sup>308</sup> Villegas, then, proposed that these ruling classes should feel their role in the nation by understating that true men were not those who could be oppressed by the economy but rather those who were able to master the economy at the service of men. The assignment was to masculinise the oligarchies into feeling elites by liberating them away from their sentimental attachments to material profits, in which peasants and workers appeared “as machines ready to be used.” In contrast, Villegas lectured, the ruling classes had to make major invest in their sentiments in order to understand that workers and peasants were human

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

beings. Furthermore, the leading classes needed to develop their democratic aspirations to respect the laboring classes, their capabilities, and their activities—their human capital—as a central part the development of a productive economy. This would create, Villegas concluded, a harmonious coexistence because every member of society could participate in the progress of the nation according to their own hierarchically defined capabilities and capacities. La Violencia would have not happened, Villegas declared, if the ruling classes had assumed, and hopefully would assume, their role according to their superiority and class ascendancy. It would not happened again if they were now able to do so, and to

lead the nation into democracy...lead the nation into peace...lead the nation into progress...[and] to place the nation among those advanced in the world. Undoubtedly, the course of a new life for a new Colombia will depend of the ruling classes. If they do not take charge...if they do not feel differently about their role in society...if they do not change their aspirations for democratic and attitudes for the nation they live in, we will have no other future than that of national destruction.<sup>309</sup>

During the late 1950s and 1960s, these professionals—as conscripts of a class trained to be the best governors in democracy—continuously made such important political calls as part of their project to educate the putatively feminine oligarchs to be true affective and masculine elites. These professional men and women could truly become middle class by rescuing these *patrones* and oligarchs away from their “traditional, elitist, violent and macho past” into a manly present composed of elites who could sentimentally engage with the social problems of the nation. In so doing, these professional expected, these oligarchs could recognize their “deserved important role” as democratic leaders of the national enterprise in achieving “progress and development.” In making these oligarchs true “authoritative men of

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<sup>309</sup>Ibid.

feeling,” furthermore, these professionals thought they were doing their job—that of structuring a professional democracy through which “every human being in society...their interests...desires and aspirations” could peacefully coexist in the development of the Colombian nation. Rather than being detached from society and isolated from the nation, these new, truly affective men with appropriate dispositions, social sensibilities and democratic aspirations could potentially create hierarchical social bonds with the laboring classes. In an hierarchically integrated society where “everyone [knew] his place,” the elite, sentimentally engaged, would lead the society by a male superiority, valuing not the “material objects they possessed” but using their class ascendance to enlighten, rather than obscure, the path to progress. They might take advantage of their superior competence to dignify, rather than ignore, “all the members of the society according to their condition,” and they might exercise their potential integrity to construct, rather than destroy, a peaceful society.<sup>310</sup>

And yet, as I have argued previously, this project of class and gender rule was eternally in the making, as professional women and men often complained in their reports and field notes, letters and memorandums about the inappropriate “class arrogance” of the oligarchs. As much as the professionals tried to get oligarchs to use their class ascendancy to lead the nation, they found that oligarchs reveled in an exaggerated sentiment of their “class importance,” disdaining other members of the

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<sup>310</sup> Conferencias dictadas y consultas profesionales en la fábrica industrial de astilleros (1961), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR; See also: Conferencias dictadas y consultas profesionales en las fábricas de acero en el departamento de Boyaca (1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR

society.<sup>311</sup> These reports' tropes and organization reflected class and gender frustrations, as professional women and men repeatedly complained they could not do their job. Many professionals protested that patronos and oligarchs, as they call them in their complaints, wanted neither to learn about the problems of the Colombian society nor to care about their potential democratic role in society. Rather than being "sweaty capitalist men" these oligarchs were destined to be feminized "traditional laggard[s] [*holgazán*]" who were becoming "the greatest obstacle to democracy, development and progress."<sup>312</sup> Detached from the society to which they belonged, these traditional laggards were perpetuating their social passivity and lack of social feelings by denying the possibility of participating in a "good-natured capitalism [*capitalismo bonachón*]" through which they could perform, as men, "the leadership of the nation." In contrast, these "lazy oligarchs" were suffering of a "classist cholera"—a fatal social disease that did not allow these oligarchs to develop any disposition of sensibility or empathy whatsoever to what other members of the society could "feel, think need or do."<sup>313</sup> Furthermore, with neither compassion nor sensitivity or understanding, these feminized traditional laggards were not willing to even give a "bead of sweat for the development of the whole nation."<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Informes de trabajo de campo y visitas empresariales en Bogotá, 1962, sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR. Notas de campo, visitas requeridas por varias industrias en el sector de cementos (1959-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid. See also, notas de campo y visitas empresariales en Bogotá (1959-1961), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid. See also: Notas de campo, visitas requeridas por varias industrias en el sector de cementos (1959-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

Some other professionals went even further with their complaints, usually unloaded in frustrated reports and memorandums to immediate superiors. In 1962, for instance, Ana Agudelo, a social worker working for the IFI trained in the School of Social Work and in several workshop sponsored by CAFETEROS during the late 1950s, wrote a rather lengthy report. She organized it by first explaining in some detail all the strategies used to persuade the *hombres de empresa* to become aware of their role. She reported, however, that given this situation, the only possible conclusion was that these oligarchs were not willing to exercise “social agency [*protagonismo social*].”<sup>315</sup> This lack of agency, Agudelo complained, was so common precisely because these “hard to understand men” possessed neither sentiments nor appropriate social dispositions but rather, and perhaps only, “a passion toward material objects.”<sup>316</sup> Although the political assignment was to dematerialize the oligarchs—that is to abstract them from the attachment to material possession as the ultimate class aspiration—Agudelo complained that this was not possible because their human sentiments and desires were driven religiously by “material profit and self-serving ambitions.”<sup>317</sup> Furthermore, Agudelo wrote, the oligarchs were a traditional force concerned only with “idolatry,” who had surrendered their sentiments and agency at the expense of an “adulation, adoration...reverence...veneration, and glorification of self-centered material profit

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<sup>315</sup> Informes del trabajo de campo, industrias en el sector de cementos (1959-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR. See also, memorado from Ana Agudelo to Julián Francisco Pérez, octubre 8, 1962, sección: departamento de personal, fondo: subgerencia administrativa, IFAR.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.



and objects.” In so doing, the oligarchs were inappropriately attributing a false value to object and things. Indeed, oligarchs continued to privilege “object and material profits” over the capacities, abilities and development of that which was priceless—human beings. Traditional, backward, feminine, and somehow not yet human—these oligarchs could not develop sensibilities that were fitting for progress, aspirations appropriate for democracy and suitable dispositions toward social peace.<sup>318</sup>

Consequently, the structuring of a professional democracy as a project of class and gender rule was paradoxically constructed through hierarchical classed and gender antagonistic bonds in which professionals, in the very process of becoming middle class, constantly found themselves in a tragic dilemma. On the one hand, the formation of middle-class identifications created a hierarchical classed and gendered antagonists (the feminized oligarchies, the patron, the privileged classes, the lazy capitalist) as the *constitutive yet excluded other* in eternal need of sentimental education on how to become true men (i.e., semimetal elites, authoritative men of feelings, *hombres de empresa* and not *patrones*) who could play a democratic role in the nation. This hierarchical excluded other, as a partial historical production of professionals themselves, was the very class constitutive possibility to materialize a professional democracy—and in doing so to become a middle-class. On the other hand, however, the very possibility that this other would *still* maintain a role of feminized oligarchs or traditional *patrones* challenged the same possibility of creating a professional democracy precisely because if they remained in this state, as several professional repeatedly wrote in reports, then middle-class professionals “were not doing their job.” Frustrated and dissatisfied, these middle-class

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

professionals experienced a constant sense of collective deception: they could not become the professional middle-class—much less materialized a professional democracy—precisely because they were not able to succeed in sentimentally educating those oligarchs into democratic men. And yet, this impossibility authorized and perpetuated the middle-class professionals as forever superior to those who were still too feminized men to lead the nation and, therefore, in need of eternal sentimental education to experience democracy.

And it is with this class and gender dilemma that professional men and women recurrently wrestled in their encounters with those oligarchs. In fact, this dilemma produced further hierarchical fragmentation among those who were attempting to perform as middle-class men and middle class women. During the early 1960s, the IFI's department of Program Evaluation, together with some consultation from CINVA, intensified performance evaluations for professionals whose job was to work with “directors, presidents, industrialists, entrepreneur, and businessmen.”<sup>319</sup> The program evaluation office sent several letters to different factories and companies inviting directors to evaluate professionals' performance.<sup>320</sup> There are very few forms and tabulated evaluations available, but it seems that the IFI requested directors to evaluate several aspects of professionals' jobs—from personal presentation to the preparation of talks and lectures. Some of these evaluations complained that professionals “lack[ed] professionalism, competence

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<sup>319</sup> Evaluación de personal vinculado al instituto (1959-1963), sección: departamento de evaluación de proyectos, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>320</sup> Letter from departamento de evaluación de proyectos to empresas industriales vinculadas a los programas de financiamiento del instituto, 1962, sección: departamento de evaluación de proyectos, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

and skills,” and presented “problems of character.” In the one short letter I have been able to find, for instance, Jesús Antonio Toro and Gabriel Millamarín, the presidents of a metal manufacturing factory in Bogotá, protested that these “women went to [their] company to tell [them] just what to do.”<sup>321</sup> With arrogance, they complained, these professional women showed “a spirit of intrigue,” and, worse still, they manifested a “violent attitude,” “neglectful manner,” and “desire to annoy,” seeking to disrupt these directors’ “usual way of doing business.” In all, these directors concluded, these professional women were “very uncomfortable to deal with.”<sup>322</sup>

As argued previously, professionals’ stories of their jobs do not offer direct evidence of past behavior but rather are a mediated source for understanding how professional women experienced the problems, frustration and deception in trying to structure a professional democracy. Furthermore, these stories allow a fuller reconstruction of the subjective professional work lives of women and their struggle to understand themselves as middle-class. As I read some of the complaints concerning Alicia Perdomo in IFI’s archive, she responded that certainly these evaluations did create anxieties among professional women. In fact, she told me, the problem with these “arrogant oligarchs” was that they could not “deal with [them] as professional women.”<sup>323</sup> Furthermore, Perdomo said, these oligarchs were unable to be “more like a real man” and to understand that “they were addressing real and professional women.” Instead, Perdomo complained to me, these oligarchs thought they were “dealing with their own wives” who showed them “deference and

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<sup>321</sup> Letter from Jesús Antonio Toro and Gabriel Millamarín to Alfredo Vanegas, September, 7, 1963, sección: departamento de evaluación de proyectos, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Alicia Perdomo interviewed with the author, November, 2004.

servility.” Servility, Perdomo continued, that “among rich women” manifested itself as an excessive “willingness to do whatever their husbands ask them to do.”

In order to demonstrate that she was not “lying,” Perdomo once again used her archive to reconstruct her historical identification as a middle-class professional woman and defend her job as a democratic force in achieving development, peace and democracy. In all, Perdomo said, she needed “to move the past so [her] professional reputation [was] not damaged.”<sup>324</sup> She invited me discuss admittedly sketchy papers, unsent draft reports and some letters produced during the late 1950s and 1960s. For her, in this material I would be able to find the truth of the matter, since these papers would speak for themselves. Even so, however, Perdomo felt compelled to advise me that privileged women, not men, were the problem in democracy.

During the late 1950s and 1960s, Perdomo devoted most, if not all, of her writing to discuss the role of these privileged women. In one of her unpublished papers, written by 1962, she criticized the role of those she then categorized as “frivolous women”—women with neither any “serious purposes in life... [nor]... female value in society.”<sup>325</sup> Moreover, Perdomo argued that among oligarchs there was a tendency to assume that “all women [were] the same.” She pondered how sometime or another they, as professional women, had to ask themselves about

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Alicia Perdomo, untitled paper, c1962, 3-4, APARC. On the one hand, these sketchy papers were written to be published somewhere, but as the case with many professionals, she never did so. Although she never tried to submit them for publication, she told me that there was not too many options, as only “political magazines existed at the moment.” And yet, the drafted reports were never sent to IFI precisely because she thought those were “way too political.” Here, I would argue, is a crucial dilemma. As a professional she could not be categorized as political—in the traditional sense, that is, political party participation—but at the same time the very job she was doing compelled her to engage in proper politics—that is to say, to educate and democratize the elites.

“those ladies in the upper spheres of the society” who were unconcerned with their life or the life of others. It was difficult not to notice these problems, wrote Perdomo, as these frivolous, careless, and irresponsible women were generally “unsympathetic to and alienated from the problems of the nation.” And when trying to do otherwise, “they frivolously assumed that everything [could] get fixed with money.”<sup>326</sup> Evident in the “social pages of any newspaper,” Perdomo elaborated in her unpublished paper, these women were framed in a selfishness that did not allow them to transcend beyond their elegant salons or social clubs. Ever worse, it was impossible not to wonder with deep melancholy why these women would go to Europe and the United States, if on their return they wanted to stay as “frivolous, or perhaps a little bit more” than when they left. As Perdomo wrote by 1962,

It this female frivolity that is highlighted when the newspaper describes, detail by detail, the characteristics of the dress, the sumptuousness of the social party or the magnificent gift...women from the privileged classes are so frivolous for true social life. They only care about having a luxurious car...driving it and having a dog riding shotgun who is named after a fancy international president, [and] these women do not even know who this president was or what he did...We have seen this triviality in newspapers, detail by detail, how they do not want to put all their preparation to use, they are just satisfied with unimportant things of life.<sup>327</sup>

By no means were these complaints unique. Reports, field notes, some formal complaints and daily memoranda suggested that professional women struggled to educate those oligarchs. While encountering these entrepreneurs, presidents and directors, these professional women reconfigured their identifications as middle class. If, as explained earlier, social workers, nurses and professional women were hired to work in these programs to educate the oligarchs into elites assuming they, as

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<sup>326</sup> Alicia Perdomo, untitled paper, c1962, 7-8, APARC.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 9.

women, would be able to transform the “tradition of politics”—that is that “machista tendency of selfishness”—among elites who they hoped could open “their hearts for a more pleasant and peaceful society.” And yet, it is the same discourse those professional women mobilized in order to define themselves as middle class. During the late 1950s and 1960s, several professional women complained, as suggested by Perdomo, that oligarchs acted like they were dealing with “their own wives at home” or, even worse, presupposed “all women were the same.”<sup>328</sup> These men of the oligarchy reacted negatively to the presence of women because, it was argued, they only wanted to “love superficial and little women” over which they could exercise a “protective and paternal authority.” The oligarchic men, said several professional women, suffered of an “inferiority complex,” because they could not face “*de tu a tu* with a intelligent women.” Instead, they expected a “wife like theirs” who was “enslaved by a valueless vanity”—that is, “an obsession and passion for their appearance”— and who was happy to be at a “level of intellectual inferiority.” Indeed, accustomed to seeing and talking with “useless decorative doll,” these men could not recognize the women’s professionalism and preparation that existed in the “social spheres of the nation,” the women complained.<sup>329</sup> As Perdomo remembered and elaborated in our dialogue,

Perdomo: We tried to work with calm, clarity, professional rectitude, judgment...but it was challenging to say the least; the situation made things worse!

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<sup>328</sup> Informes de trabajo de campo y visitas empresariales en Bogotá, 1962, sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR. Notas de campo, visitas requeridas por varias industrias en el sector de cementos (1959-1963), sección: departamento de estudios especiales, fondo: subgerencia técnica, IFIAR.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

R.L: What do you mean by the situation? Working with those *patronos*

Perdomo: Well, yes. But also the situation of women in the country. To do our job professionally, we needed calm, clarity and all of that because facing those *patronos* was not easy thing to do. I am telling you, we had to have patience, persuasive sweetness [*dulzura persuasiva*] to work with them... professional knowledge...preparation and a certain kind of toughness.

R.L: But why were all of these qualities really important for your job?

Perdomo: As I told you earlier because these men had to see we were not just any women... We had to use all the feminine qualities that nature had provided us with to do our best effort. Logically, at the moment not all the women were prepared for such a difficult job. Perhaps now they are more prepared, although I doubt it...but back then for sure only selected few were really well prepared to deal with the tremendous difficulties that Colombia was facing ...not all women, I mean, not all women were really well prepared morally, intellectually, emotionally to do the job successfully...we could not continue doing things *a la macha*. We wanted to do it with a generous eagerness to serve others, not with egotism, but with professional neutrality to see what we could do for the democracy of the nation...professional dignity, knowledge, a certain professional fitness in every possible sense...and that's why what we were doing was important, because we were doing something, no matter how small it was, for the democracy of the nation...ours was a difficult profession.<sup>330</sup>

And yet again, this gendered and classed collective self-deception at not being able to educate the men of the oligarchy, and presumably by extension their careless wives, became the very opportunity to perform as middle-class professional women. Now, these professional women could place themselves as inhabiting a classed and gendered position as educators of oligarchs and the “frivolous women” attached to them, who should be placed *below* precisely because they were in an eternal need of sentimental education. In inhabiting this gendered and classed position, these professional women always attempted to create a professional

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<sup>330</sup> Alicia Perdomo, interview with author, November, 2004.

democracy through which all members of the society could coexist peacefully and hierarchically integrated.

### **Encountering the Laboring Classes—From Peasants and Workers into Capitalists**

Working with the poor made me realize who I really was.<sup>331</sup>

As explained in previous chapter, during the 1950s and more forcefully with the consolidation of National Front and the formalization of the Alliance for Progress, several state institutions, new universities, and private organizations carefully selected and intimately trained professionals to work assiduously with the laboring classes. As several historians have shown, these professionals were crucial in the processes of early industrialization during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in different places throughout Latin America.<sup>332</sup> Yet, whereas these projects were rather sporadic, at least in the Colombia case, the consolidation of the National Front, a remarkably state expansion and the development of private transnational organizations began a gradual and usually disjointed promotion of economic planning, social management, population improvement and proper political training to create social peace and political stability peace as the quintessential conditions to create democracy. Propelled by these transnational and national interest in creating

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<sup>331</sup> Alberto Valencia, interview with author, March 2005.

<sup>332</sup> Susan Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Reworking of the Working Class, 1920-1964* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Javier Zaenz, *Mirar la Infancia*; Mary Kay Vaughan, *Culture Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Tomas Klubock, *Contested Communities*; Karin Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico* (State College: Pennsylvania State University, 2001); Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).



the proper conditions for democracy, which would relegate violence to be a “nightmare of the past,” these professionals men and women, in the very process of becoming middle class, elaborated a coherent but contradictory gendered and classed project of rule to prepare the laboring classes on how to live in democracy. Nurses, doctors, social workers, human economists, agronomists and architects attempted to put in practice this project of democratic rule through at least three overlapping and competing fronts: with the intimate guidance of professionals, peasants as well workers, and certainly their families, needed to transform themselves into truly *gendered and classed economic subjects* for the progress of the nation; those laboring classes needed to be closely guided by professionals on how to participate actively and properly as *political subjects* in democracy; and, finally, those laboring classes deserved face-to-face professional guidance in becoming subjects who were *socially conscious* not only of who they were but, more importantly, of what they were able to do collectively for themselves.<sup>333</sup>

Alberto Valencia, an architect trained during the late 1950s in CINVA who worked for the ICT during the 1960s, assiduously worked to create what he thought were the appropriate environmental conditions for democracy and progress to flourish. In our long conversations, he recalled his professional encounter with the peasants and workers as a gendered and classed experiences.<sup>334</sup> Those encounters, he said, shaped his life as a professional man. “There was a turning point in my life when I went to work with the peasants...a before and after,” he proudly remembered. Furthermore, Valencia argued he was transformed from a naïve young man into a

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<sup>333</sup> As will become apparent, in this chapter I only elaborate on the first part of these competing projects.

<sup>334</sup> Alberto Valencia, interview with the author, March 2005, tape recording.

professional man quite aware of the democratic role he had to play in society. Besides, he asked me, who else would have been able to at least try to guide those peasants into a democratic path? The oligarchs, he answered himself, had always been the same—they do not care about the poor. We, Valencia continued narrating his experiences, middle-class professionals were able to do something about it. Who else? Valencia repeatedly asked in our conversation. And in order to demonstrate this gendered and classed experience, he appealed to his rather disorganized personal archive to narrate what he thought and felt in those late years of the 1950s when he encountered peasants and workers who needed his professional preparation to live in a democracy.

By reading his field notes and professional diaries, he held that, although he was very committed to working with the peasants, he felt at the time he was “still a privileged city life boy.” Valencia needed, he said, some real and manly experiences in life to become somebody important: not in terms of prestige or privilege, but rather as a collaborator in the consolidation of peace and democracy in Colombia. To face those “remote but attractive places” like a man would help him to overcome his “fears and weaknesses of city-boy life,” and enter into a more challenging, rewarding, and masculine life where he could be recognized by his professional commitment to democracy. By reading some of his field-notes, Valencia began to remember those first trips to “learn about the Colombian peasant in person...their families...their lives...their souls...their activities.”<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

As part of what it seems to be the very first professional trip in 1955, he went to Anolaima, a small town two hours outside of Bogotá. He sought not only go and visit the peasants, but also to guide and teach them how to live in democracy.<sup>336</sup> Interestingly, Valencia remembered these first experiences as happening during the first administration of the National Front from 1958 to 1962, even though the very his first trip to Anolaima occurred in 1955, when dictator Gustavo Rojas Pinilla was in power. Valencia insisted that the National Front formally began some years prior and, consequently, he did not work in any way possible under a program supported by the dictatorial regime. The National Front, and more specifically Lleras Camargo, Valencia explained to me, gave Colombia the opportunity to leave “La Violencia and enter a moment of peace and democracy.” Valencia placed himself within this opportunity and argued that the importance of his job was precisely because he, as a manly middle-class man, was also working for democracy and peace by properly preparing those who needed the most—the peasants and workers. As we discussed,

R.L: If you started to go to Anolaima in 1954 or 1955, and I see how you went to several training workshops during those years, and Rojas Pinilla was in power even if there was a lot of discussion to remove him from power.

A.V: No, I do not think so. Everything started with the National Front and president Alberto Lleras Camargo. The National Front had getting rid of la Violencia as an objective and Rojas Pinilla was the cause of it. We received letters from Lleras recognizing our professional job. And I only wanted peace because so many years of violence, it was not possible that we wanted more and my job was just that...to bring peace and democracy to the rural setting. For many people what we were doing was too little, but it was something, and besides, after that I realized how little it was and that I had to do more...so I started working in Anolaima under the National Front.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid. Field notes c1956, Alberto Valencia Personal Archive, hereafter AVPA. See also: Section: “Actas de discusión y enseñanza,” Folder : trabajo de campo, December, 1954 and July, 1955, CINVAR.

<sup>337</sup> Alberto Valencia, interview with the author, March 2005.

At stake is not whether Valencia was correct in his historical understanding. Rather, I would argue, Valencia was specifically narrating how the National Front began as a specific way to remember himself as a gendered and classed subject—that is, as a middle-class professional man working for the peace and democracy of Colombia and having nothing to do with the short-lived dictatorship.<sup>338</sup> Valencia's retelling attempted to authorize his professional role as a middle-class men working for peace and democracy. And precisely because dictatorship and violence were associated with Rojas Pinilla, he was now convinced that in order to maintain a professional reputation he needed to celebrate the role of the National Front even though, as it will become clear in the next chapter, he himself would sharply criticize it because of its lack of commitment to real democracy.

Working during the late 1950s with several rural populations as part of numerous community development programs, Valencia decided to live with a family in Anolaima. In his oral history, he remembered that if a true professional man wanted to get familiar with “the peasants and all their complexities,” he could not just go to the rural parts of the country and then return to the “luxury of city life.”<sup>339</sup> Valencia wanted to stay in a rural setting for a period of three or four weeks to be recognized as a true professional man working for the democracy of the nation. In his field notes, he wrote that although he was hesitant to ask “difficult questions,” since he did not want to sound too sophisticated, he could not help but begin

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<sup>338</sup> It is even more interesting to see how later in his life, as it will become clear in the next chapter, Valencia was very critical of the National Front.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

wondering about the family, the home, the land, and their occupations, along with their literacy, cultural relations, political tendencies, and personal belongings. He was very happy, Valencia recalled, because these experiences were finally giving him a “valuable and intimate sense” about the specific conditions of the peasant—a intimate sense that was rather crucial, since the democratic guidance was to take place by integrating, rather than ignoring, the peasant’s family.<sup>340</sup> Echoing his training and class preparation, Valencia usually wrote in his reports how he was, above all, attempting to establish some “rapport with the people in order to be accepted by them.”<sup>341</sup> It was crucial, it seems, for Valencia to tell the peasants “how much [he, Alberto] would learn from them.” He was willing to get involved in “how to grow vegetables, how to cultivate, how to treat the land [and] how to live in a rural setting” only if the peasants allowed him to do so. Alberto was committed to teaching not only how “to build houses” but also, and more importantly for the architect, create the necessary conditions “to live in democracy.”<sup>342</sup>

As a result, for Alberto was clear that, unlike with the careless oligarchs, he needed to not only preach and work for the good of the peasant families, but to celebrate—and even sanctify—every act of their labors and pleasures, their gestures, their tools and their tasks. Consequently, field notes as well as final reports to CINVA and ICT were organized to show that he was doing his job—learning about the peasants and become known by them. In several reports during the late 1950s and 1960s, Alberto described his strategies to, above all, become “unnoticeable” among

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid. See also Folder : trabajo de campo, December, 1954, July, and November, 1955.

<sup>341</sup> Reportes de trabajo de campo, c1958, AVPA. See also, reportes finales de trabajo de campo, proyecto Anolaima, 1955-1962, CINVAR.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

peasants themselves. If, as argued previously, there was a need among middle-class professionals to dress properly to establish a professional authority those patronos and oligarchs, now, in contrast, professional had to dress *not* to impress, but rather to be somehow mask their class origins. That is, professional class authority had to be established by going unnoticed among workers and peasants precisely because that would create the opportunity to have a democratic influence over those who needed to be educated. Alberto remembered how he specifically did not want to dress “so professionally” that could provoke “hard feelings among peasants” and hence not being able to pursue his job as a professional. As he said in our conversation,

It was clear that you did not want to look too different...to dress like a city boy and just remind them [the peasants] how poorly they were dressed. I used to choose simple clothes [*ropa sencilla*] to go by unnoticed [*desapercibido*]...and I had friends who did not pay attention to how to dress and it was costly for them because then their job, well, it was really difficult once the first impression was made, since you begin by creating too much of a difference just because the way you dress. Then, it did not matter how poor you want to dress, the first impression was what counted. It was not big deal for me. I was just trying to somehow fill the cultural gap that existed between the cultured elites and the peasants. If we started by reminding them of this gap, I thought our job would be more difficult for us because there would not be either enthusiasm [*ánimo*] or trust from them.<sup>343</sup>

It was therefore imperative, Alberto emphasized in reading his field notes, not to make himself be seen as “excessively superior or different.”<sup>344</sup> Alberto, then, decided to wear a poncho, use the pickaxe and even, he wrote in his reports and field notes, to get his hands dirty “by working the land.” He wanted to participate in the “darkness of the drinking places” and seating in the floor when visiting peasant’s

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<sup>343</sup> Alberto Valencia, interviewed with the author, March 2005.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid. See also, trabajo de campo, c 1961, AVPA.

families. Valencia proudly read his field notes to constantly remind me that he never asked the peasants to “remove their hat” —and, in his committed disposition to portray himself as not excessively superior, Valencia *ordered* the peasants “not to address [him] as doctor.”<sup>345</sup>

And yet, it was not easy, he argued in our conversation, because his privileged upbringing somehow had put him “away from the reality of [his] nation.”<sup>346</sup> It was precisely this privilege that he wanted to overcome in order to become a true middle-class professional man—to transform in practice the habits and thoughts that continually reproduced their privileged life as middle-class, Alberto wanted to show their “sympathy [and] “solidarity” for the oppressed. For him, Valencia wrote in unpublished papers and field notes during the late 1950s and 1960s, to be a middle-class professional was to truly understand those who could be guided into social and democratic change, unlike the oligarchs for whom the people were just “numerous ignorant deserving their situation.”<sup>347</sup>

Although one could be tempted to merely commemorate Alberto political involvement with the peasants and their putative problems, I argue that Alberto’s story offers the opportunity to think more carefully about the middle-class professionals and the project of class and gender rule these professionals attempted to structure. For Alberto, and those who defined themselves as middle-class professionals, it was not a matter reeducating themselves through peasant discipline

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<sup>345</sup> Alberto Valencia, interviewed with author, March, 2005. See trabajo de campo, c 1961, AVPA and reportes finales de trabajo de campo. Proyecto Anolaima.” 1955-1962, CINVAR.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Field notes, C 1959, AVPA.

and merging into the anonymity of the “numerous peasants.” Above all, these professionals—in attempting to pursue their project of class and gender rule—had to continually manifest their double hierarchical collective selves. That is, it was crucial for professionals like Valencia to be seen as a part of the peasants precisely because that could create a hierarchical social bond between themselves and the peasants so that those professionals would be able to prepare those peasants to live in democracy. And yet, professional also needed to be seen as middle-class professionals in order to exercise a hierarchical authority in providing the necessary conditions for those peasants to transform themselves in democratic subjects. In this double perpetual formation of the middle class, the peasantry and the working class were *intimate hierarchical others*, rather than a distant distinct ones as we tend to assume, to be respected as much as to be transformed. In this project of class and gender rule, professionals sought to locate themselves above—although in an intimate class relation with—those they thought should be endlessly taught to experience democracy.

Professionals worked in this double hierarchical relationship to immerse themselves into what they thought was crucial to transform peasants into truly economic subjects: the point of view of the peasant and worker. If, professionals elaborated, it was necessary to transform the laboring classes, it was imperative to position oneself with how those workers and peasants worked, lived and thought. Furthermore, these professionals hoped to be able to discover the political rationality of these peasants and workers—that is, their conditions, their desires, and, most importantly, how these peasants and workers used their available human capital and



material resources to make specific economic decisions. The task, then, was to respect, tolerate and certainly, maximize class difference to transform the peasants into truly economic subjects.

In 1960, for example, Lilia García, a social worker working in a program supported by CINVA, CARE, the Ministry of Education and ICT, went to work in Zipaquirá, a rural town two hours away from Bogotá. After several visits, she wrote in her field notes her thoughts about the major objectives she thought should be achieved when coming back to work with peasants. Echoing discourses on community development, she wrote that the transformation of the peasants and his families required them to actively participate in their own process of “democratic improvement.”<sup>348</sup> This was crucial, she argued, because until now the peasants—their needs, their ways of life, their habits, their conditions—had been ignored and marginalized. For several professionals, she complained, the peasants were a foreign country within their own country. Even worse, García protested, these professionals had wasted or deformed all the human capital these peasant classes owned. Now, it was about time, as true middle-class professionals, to discover “*the human capital* of those who have been ignored,” and, more importantly, to guide those peasants into how to invest in their human capital in order to multiply it for the economic benefit of peasants themselves. Because there was a tendency to ignore the “human latent talent [and] intelligence,” the poor had been seen only as passive economic actors in the society. In contrast, the professional would guide, rather than not impose, the process of restoring the “economic agency [*protagonismo económico*]” of the poor,

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<sup>348</sup> Notas de trabajo de campo y material de entrenamiento, 1959-1961, sección: arquitectura y urbanismo, departamento de proyectos, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTAR.

by inviting them to maximize their human and material capital according to what they were capable of doing.<sup>349</sup> Thus, in respecting, tolerating and even celebrating the class difference of the peasants, García, and numerous professional like her, envisioned the possibility that the peasants could become not only a productive part of the nation but also, and I would argue quite crucially, become capitalists themselves—that is, owners of their own human capital, who would know how to, under the specific class conditions as peasant and workers, produce, accumulate, invest, maximize and multiply that human capital for their own “family enterprises.”<sup>350</sup>

Despite recent assumptions in scholarship that sees the economy as ontological given or as a determinant in some dreaded last instance, I would like to argue that these attempts to transform peasants into active economic subjects (i.e., capitalists) play a very important role in shaping the gender and class rule of bringing a middle-class professional democracy into being. These professionals, drawing on discourses of community development, attempted to maximize hierarchical class difference not through the alienation of the peasants’ and workers’ labor, as we have thus far argued, but rather and more importantly, by conceiving peasants and workers as independent economic subjects who could concretize their labor into human capital that could be accumulated and invested to their own benefit. This project would transform, I would argue, feminine laboring classes dependent on oligarchs into masculine independent capitalists capable of investing their own human capital for the development of their “family and national enterprise.”

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

As has been compellingly argued by several historians, these projects centered their efforts in the household as the bedrock of working-class communities.<sup>351</sup> Home was, above all, the center of the potential family enterprise to be created and where those prospective capitalists should invest and optimize their own human capital. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, professional women and men were very active in this task by constructing (quite literally) houses as the quintessential space to transform the laboring classes. In 1962, for instance, Javier Gómez, an architect working for ICT, went to the south of Bogotá to work in a place he described as neither as rural nor urban but indistinguishably both. The very social reports, the architectural plans he drew and the interviews he made were the ground through which he contemplated two related questions about the situation of these peasants/workers: “how these potential laboring classes” were living in family setting and, perhaps more importantly, whether all members of the family were using their available human capital. This was crucial, Gómez argued, because “a house was not just a house but an economic unit for the future life of the Colombian laboring classes.” Furthermore, these professional women wanted to select and discover working-class families with the potential to channel their human resources for their own benefit so they could live not only in a new house but also in a new self that

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<sup>351</sup> Susan Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Reworking of the Working Class, 1920-1964* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Javier Zaenz, *Mirar la Infancia*; Mary Kay Vaughan, *Culture Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Tomas Klubock, *Contested Communities*; Karin Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico* (State College: Pennsylvania State University, 2001); Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

could manage to overcome economic passivity by using all the “latent, dormant, hidden and wasted human capital at their disposal.”<sup>352</sup>

After several professional visits to the barrio, Gómez decided to make some interviews in order to immerse himself into the point of view of these peasant/workers. According to him, he wanted to know how these laboring classes envisioned their ideal houses so that he, as a professional committed to the perceived needs of the workers, could follow their lead. He celebrated that these peasants wanted independent, single-family houses, arguing that they really wanted to change the place where they were living at the moment. Likewise, he celebrated that there were enough nuclear families that could lead to the integration of family roles to make the home a productive place. Despite his intent, however, Gómez wrote extensively in his social reports how frustrated he was to learn that, above all, these peasants/workers did not know how to arrange and utilize the spaces in their houses efficiently. Although it has proven impossible to find these interviews, my interview with the architect suggests that he complained because the potential occupants of the houses did not know how to separate the spaces within the houses to make it more productive—in a word, Gómez wrote in his reports, they wrongly envisioned the spaces of the houses.<sup>353</sup> Specifically, he complained extensively because these laboring classes suffered of what he called “the immediacy of earnings.” There seemed to be one answer that bothered Gómez in particular —workers and peasants

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<sup>352</sup> Notas de trabajo de campo y material de entrenamiento, 1959-1961, sección: arquitectura y urbanismo, departamento de proyectos, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTAR

<sup>353</sup> Interview with the Author, March 2005. See also Notas de trabajo de campo y material de entrenamiento, 1959-1961, sección: arquitectura y urbanismo, departamento de proyectos, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTAR.

envisioned having a small business or store in the house to increase family income. In report after report, Gómez portrayed himself explaining these peasants how underproductive and even counterproductive this economic aspiration was, because it was driven by the immediacy of earnings.

And this was, indeed, an economic problem that professionals complained about when working with peasants and workers. According to these professionals, the laboring classes could not think about the future of the family enterprises because they had a rationality that said “money for today...no capital for tomorrow.”<sup>354</sup> The preference to have a small business in the house was read as a lack of economic concern with accumulating human capital, and that immediate satisfaction was the most important preoccupation. With this behavior, several professionals argued, the laboring classes’ human capital would ultimately be wasted due to the lack of distinction between the workplace and the place of rest. Assuming that peasant *men* would be working in the home/store, these professionals complained that it would take time away from the family that, simultaneously, would be reflected in a deficit of human capital, since the children would be thus deprived of their parents’ love and attention. For professionals, it was crucial to create an appropriate environment for human capital to be accumulated, and families with no parents meant necessarily a waste of capital because the children, the future capitalists, would be unable to develop their intelligence, attitudes, and interests toward being independent. Here, the abandonment of the children could have a rather devastating economic effect:

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<sup>354</sup> Notas de trabajo de campo y material de entrenamiento, 1959-1961, sección: arquitectura y urbanismo, departamento de proyecto, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTAR.

they could potentially be unable to become owners of their human capital, because that human capital had been squandered.

And in order to prepare the environment for the true capitalist to emerge, it was argued, “the mothers of the laboring classes” were simultaneously seen as in dire need to be prepared in the important matters of development and democracy. Women were also to be guided into truly gendered economic subjects. Luz Eugenia Correa, a nurse and a social worker assigned to a working-class neighborhood in Bogotá called Quiroga in the early months of 1963, wrote in her weekly reports that the most challenging part of her job was to transform, on the one hand, how the mothers of the laboring classes were seen by professionals in general, and on the other, how those mothers thought about the future of their children. Always attempting to respect the “felt needs” of the working class, Correa routinely argued in her reports submitted to the office of Social Service at ICT that it was imperative to include these mothers as “active members of the society.”<sup>355</sup> For so long, Correa wrote, “the machismo of the working class” and the social prejudice of working-class men were the major obstacle to women’s active participation in their own development.

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<sup>355</sup> Notas de campo, proyecto Quiroga, 1958-1965, sección de arquitectura y urbanismo, subgerencia técnica, ICTAR.



La Asistencia Social practica visita domiciliaria a una familia para orientar hacia la solución de un problema. Bogotá

## Servicio Social de Organización de la Comunidad

*La organización de la comunidad, es un proceso altamente social y democrático mediante el cual los miembros de una comunidad vecinal, por su propia iniciativa o mediante el estímulo de técnicos en estas materias, se reúnen para estudiar y conocer en una forma ordenada las necesidades y problemas que afrontan y los recursos materiales y humanos de que disponen, para elaborar y desarrollar planes de acción que permitan ofrecer una vida plena y abundante a cada uno de los individuos que integran la comunidad.*

*Toda comunidad, cualquiera que sea su condición económica y social, tiene posibilidades de mejoramiento.*

*Toda comunidad cuenta con valores humanos muchas veces desconocidos y recursos materiales, que la Asistente Social puede aprovechar y encauzar para el bienestar de la comunidad.*

Illustration 1. Servicio a la comunidad. Source: Manual de Servicio Social, Dirección de departamento de Servicio Social, 1961, subgerencia administrativa, ICTAR.

And yet, Correa also cited, on numerous occasions, how working class women had accepted this traditional role, and she urged them to participate more fully in the development of family enterprises and, by extension, in national development.<sup>356</sup> It was imperative that these mothers begin thinking as modern members of society—they had to be guided in forming a “mentality for the future” and in planning for the “long run [*largo plazo*].” Correa complained, like many of her professional peers, that members of the working classes were usually driven by an economic desire to satisfy their needs immediately. Describing an interview she conducted in 1962, Correa reported to the ICT that it was disappointing to see “how much human capital was being wasted.” “Things were not getting any easier” for Luz Eugenia, it seems, since she was getting used to “too

<sup>356</sup> Heidi Tinsman *Partners in Conflict* 142.

much poverty.” Fathers were spending their time playing tejo and drinking, and mothers were neglecting “their tasks.”<sup>357</sup> According to Correa, the mothers of the laboring classes had “a lot of unused human capital” but did not have the right mind to properly—and profitably—cultivate it to their family’s benefit. Above all, those mothers were able to teach their children “how to gulp down [their food]” but never how to eat properly. They knew how to get along but never how to live to “the fullest extent of their own human capacity and energy.” As she eloquently wrote in several reports during the early 1960s,

These are not ignorant mothers...they know who their sons are...and they give them food and try to take care of them. They know that. But the problem is their obscure and indecipherable mind...it is this mind that does not allow them to progress, to think of the future of their families...in the development of their own capacities. It is the human capacity, the human energy that counts and not their stomachs—How much food do we need to make children capable of using their own human resources? If only these mothers were able to develop what is important, to teach their children to be better, to develop un *sentido de superación*, then those women could develop their own familial enterprises.<sup>358</sup>

Furthermore, the fate of working-class children (i.e., the future capitalists of the nation), Correa continuously argued, depended upon how mothers of the laboring classes would invest their human capital—that is to say “those feminine attributes or virtues” belonging to their female sex—to prepare the proper familial environment for the accumulation of human capital. Correa, along with other professionals working with peasants and laboring families, advised those mothers that if a husband were to be at home and included in—rather than excluded from—the family enterprises, it was necessary that they (the wives) prepare a welcoming environment. These professionals urged the mother of the laboring classes to keep a clean house where their husband would

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<sup>357</sup> Notas de campo, proyecto Quiroga, 1958-1965, sección de arquitectura y urbanismo, subgerencia técnica, ICTAR.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.



be happy to be around spending time with their wives and children, providing not only monetary satisfaction but, more importantly, love, responsibility, moderation, dialogue and attention; these professional women offered advice on hygiene, nutrition, child development and household budgeting so these working class women would no longer play a passive role but rather an active one by taking care of the capitalists of today (i.e., their husbands) and the capitalists of tomorrow (i.e., their children). As active members of society, it was argued, they would create “peaceful and harmonious marriage” as the cornerstone upon which the human capital would accumulate. These professional women envisioned housewives creating the necessary (class) environment for peace and democracy to flourish precisely because their husband and children, rather than struggle with other groups in society, would only be concerned with becoming true men—that is to say, bosses of their own life, owners of their own human capital, and capitalists of their own family enterprises.



Madre de familia recibe instrucciones de la Asistencia Social sobre higiene y cuidado de los hijos. Barrio Quiroga, Bogotá.

“La asistente social instruye a la madre sobre el cuidado e higinene de los niños. Le da sugerencias sobre la forma de asearlos y vestirolos convenientemente conforme a sus posibilidades económicas.”  
Manual de Servicio Social, Dirrección de departamento de Servicio Social, 1961, subgerencia admnistrativa, ICTAR.

In several teaching outlines, social workers, home economists and nurses advised the mothers of the laboring classes to “help their husbands want to be with them.” A modern wife, these professionals contended, was not one who obligated her husband to

work overtime, earning supplementary income that would force him to come home very late. According to teaching outlines and reports written during the late 1950s and 1960s, the problem was that working class men were “asked only to be breadwinner husbands” at the expense of what was important in the long run.<sup>359</sup> Numerous professional women, then, argued that the task of the modern woman of the laboring class—as a wife and as a mother—was not only to domesticate her husband but also to prepare the family environment for him to be truly capitalist—that is, a man capable of investing his own human capital in the future of the family enterprise by being “with their children, talking to them, taking care of them, the stuff that cannot be measured in monetary terms.” In so doing, these new capitalists would produce children willing to be productive “for their families...and for the nation...strong minded children who are incorporated into progress and democracy.”<sup>360</sup>

Thus, these professionals, in their process of becoming middle-class, envisioned a professional democracy in which the working class would be hierarchically included to perform their specific virtues corresponding to their class and gender. Working-class women would become modern wives and mothers, whereas men would be further masculinized into capitalists who simultaneously could not only provide for their wives and children, but more importantly, invest in their future family enterprises. And in order to do so, these masculinized capitalists should affirm their authority over women who, developing the human virtues specific to their sex, should prepare the proper environment

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<sup>359</sup> Reportes e informes de trabajo en veredas rurales cundinamarquesas, 1959-1963, sección de divulgación rural, division de economia rural, STACAR. See also: Notas de trabajo de campo y material de entrenamiento, 1959-1961, sección: arquitectura y urbanismo, departamento de proyecto, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTAR; Carmen Sofía Torres “Relaciones familiares y humanas, CINVAR.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

for the accumulation of the family's—and by extension, the nation's—human capital. As Blanca Hernández, a home economist working with ICT, described the role of the modern laboring class wife in a report filed during the early 1960s,

In all of our programs, training of working-class women is vital since she needs to learn to be a women in every sense of the word. The family depends on the women... on their spiritual education... and the role of the husband depends on the family. Wives must take advantage to keep their husbands at home with the children. She must always be at home to welcome him...she must not go out when he is at home...she must treat him as the owner of the home [*el propietario del hogar*]...She must make the home a welcoming place, peaceful, harmonious where her husband is happy to arrive, is happy to reenergize his human capacities...where he is willing to talk to his children...For the family enterprise to function, wives must develop small virtues: attention, tolerance, care, flexibility, generosity, sincerity and sacrifice.<sup>361</sup>

Because a great deal of political hope was invested in these projects to constitute a professional democracy through which everybody could develop their task according to their sex and class, some professionals repeatedly complained in their reports about the impossibility of achieving their class assignments. Although the reports are less specific in this regard, one can sense how home economists, social workers and nurses could not overcome their gender frustrations nor their class deceptions. Although showing “sympathy and understanding,” these professional women regularly griped that working class wives did not show any “interest in bettering their situation.” They found it frustrating that, given the services provided by professionals, the mothers of the laboring classes were still not able to “help themselves.”<sup>362</sup> Their assigned role as modern wives, a social worker protested, was seemingly inapt for these women who only wanted “to have food on the table.” Another social worker wrote in a memorandum to the office to the

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<sup>361</sup>Notas de trabajo de campo y material de entrenamiento, 1959-1961, sección: arquitectura y urbanismo, departamento de proyecto, fondo: subgerencia técnica, ICTAR.

<sup>362</sup>Informes y evaluaciones de trabajo, 1959-1963, departamento de personal, subgerencia general, ICTAR.

Social Service at ICT in 1963 that she was trying very hard, but that these working-class women were perfectly content to have “absent husbands who can provide money for the household.”<sup>363</sup>

As was true in the case of working with the oligarchs, the structuring of a professional democracy as a project of class and gender rule was paradoxically constructed through hierarchical bonds in which professionals, in the very process of becoming middle class, constantly found themselves in a tragic dilemma. While the class assignment for these professionals was to produce the conditions for class harmony and political stability as quintessential conditions for democracy and peace to emerge, in practice the formation of middle-class identifications created hierarchical antagonists (the not yet modern wife, the working-class machistas) as *the included hierarchical other* in constant need of guidance and education. In the process, these professionals sought to orient these laboring classes on how to become true economic men (i.e., capitalists and modern wives) who could play their gendered and classed role in the constitution of familial, and by extension, national enterprises. Furthermore, these professionals would guide these laboring classes on how to live productively and peacefully in democracy so that the confrontational style of politics that had doomed Colombia to so many years of violence could finally be overcome. These hierarchical/included others, were partially historical productions of the professionals themselves. At the same time, this other's existence was the condition that enabled the emergence of the middle class professional, and concomitantly, professional democracy. And yet, paradoxically, the very possibility that these mothers of the laboring classes and their husbands could *still* maintain

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<sup>363</sup> Evaluaciones laborales, 1963-1965, sección de servicio a la comunidad, departamento de servicio social, subgerencia administrativa, ICTR.

traditional economic roles, caring only for the immediacy of material satisfaction, threatened the effort to create a professional democracy precisely because if they remained in this state, then middle-class professionals “were not doing their job.” Frustrated and disappointed, these middle-class professional men and women experienced a constant sense of collective deception: they could neither become a true professional middle-class nor construct a professional democracy because they were not able to succeed in educating these working men to be true owners of their own human capital, or in guiding traditional women to become modern wives preparing the environment for new enterprises to emerge at the service of their family’s improvement. And yet this failure, this gender frustration and collective class disillusionment authorized and perpetuated the middle-class professionals as forever class superiors whose dire democratic obligation it was to govern those who should be beneath them precisely because they were not yet ready to experience the pleasures of democracy.

And it is this gender and class dilemma that professional men and women recurrently wrestled with in their encounters with those laboring classes. As was true with the oligarchs, this dilemma produced further hierarchical fragmentation among those who were attempting to perform as middle-class men and middle-class women. José Tarazona, a rural specialist working for ICT and involved in programs of community development in Santandercito during the early 1960s, wrote a lengthy letter to the director of the office of social services complaining about the role played by social workers and home economists and educadoras de vivienda who were carrying out programs of social development. Tarazona blamed women for his frustration at not being able to perform his class assignment as a true professional. For some time, he wrote in 1962, he had been



working closely with the peasant families of Santandercito and, more importantly, had somehow succeeded in being accepted by the people. Indeed, he argued, his dress was “only slightly” distinguishable from the peasants’.<sup>364</sup> Furthermore, Tarazona reported he was even using a ruana that, in the “darkness of the night, could make [him] pass as a peasant.” He was welcomed in all homes, whether he came to work with the peasants for a given project or just for a social call. He could even attend weddings and parties not just as “a special guest but as part of the pueblo.” He was immersing himself, his letter implied, in their class environment, a crucial step for discovering their rationality and thus, for initiating a process of education to make those peasants into true economic men according to their own conditions. In all, Tarazone was performing his class assignment as a true professional men.<sup>365</sup>

And yet, he complained, the office of Social Service at ICT made a “pointless decision” by sending some social workers, home economists and nurses to work with peasant families. A pointless decision, Tarazona argued, because these girls were never prepared for the “toughness of the rural setting.”<sup>366</sup> It was, he argued, a job for professional men, and not for those “girls who [had] just come from their luxurious city houses.” They were becoming obstacles to the transformation he, as a true man, was about to effect in the lives of these peasants families. Tarazona was discouraged, he wrote, because since these girls had come to the town, most families associated him with them and had become distrustful of his role as a professional man. Frustrated and

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<sup>364</sup>Letter from José Tarazona to Arturo Bernal, February 11, 1962, sección de programación y evaluación , departamento de servicio social, subgerencia administrative ICT.

<sup>365</sup>Ibid.

<sup>366</sup>Ibid.

disappointed, Tarazona griped that the only job these girls got right was to remind the peasants of how alien they were. He complained to the director of the office of social service at ICT,

These young ladies speak to the peasants in the familiar *tu* form, which in their context and environment openly implied arrogance. These girls are city girls who do not know that here the peasants always use the formal *usted* form...Unlike the careful arrival of my group, these ladies could only come in a jeep in a very noticeable way and these young ladies were expected to be seen upon their arrival. Because of their sex, they were not able to walk for a few miles and thereby be unnoticeable at the moment of their arrival. The environment is rough. They came wearing fancy dress, high heels and cosmetics that only made it clear to the peasants how *extranjero* we were. These girls reminded the peasants of the cultural gap. And some of them preferred to stay in the jeep to avoid direct contact with the people...they are not really good workers...they are just city girls. I beg your help in this regard as I have always thought this work is not for women. I hope that you understand my complaints as I write them only with the concern that we really get our professional job right.<sup>367</sup>

Although rare in its eloquence, this missive is by no means unique. In fact, it is fair to say that during the late 1950s and 1960s many professional men were dubious about the possibility of working with professional women in social programs. As is suggested by Tarazona, those frustrations and deceptions at not being able to perform as truly middle class professional men—that is, to educate and transform the laboring classes into true economic beings—was closely associated with the entrance of “city girls” into a range of professions. Those “city girls,” several professional men complained, were becoming an obstacle to achieving progress and development as they did not know “how to approach the poor, how to listen to them, how to immerse themselves in their environment.”<sup>368</sup> These gender tensions further highlighted the paradoxical constitution of professional democracy,

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<sup>367</sup>Ibid.

<sup>368</sup>Ibid.



raising new anxieties about the ability of professional men and women to continue “doing [their] jobs.”

### ***Conclusion***

In this chapter I have argued how during the late 1950s and early 1960s some professionals, in their effort to become middle-class women and men, sought to create a professional democracy through which they could place themselves in a classed and gendered position as eternal democratic connoisseurs—rather than experts—with an urgent political obligation to orient both the oligarchs and the laboring classes. In deploying imperial and transnational discourses about the importance of professionalized social relations in the quest for peace and democracy, these middle-class men and women attempted to create a professional democracy that could produce the conditions needed to live in peace and enjoy political stability. On the one hand, they endeavored to transform feminine oligarchs into feeling masculine elites, so that they could become an integral part of the national body and coexist peacefully—that is, hierarchically—with other social groups in pursuit of a common goal: the progress and development of the Colombian nation. On the other hand, in the process of becoming middle class, these professionals also attempted to change the passive and nationally marginalized laboring classes into independent economic and political subjects ready to actively participate in democracy, so that they, too, could enjoy social peace and political stability. These professionals were those who would recognize and put to work the very human capital that neither the elites nor the laboring classes were able to utilize by themselves. These professional men and women could know, because of their professional training on national

problems, what the other classes did not. Professionals could perform as middle-class men and women in the very process of appreciating the social problems that other classes could not be aware of. In all, these professionals tried to structure a professional democracy through which they could respect and maximize class differences—that is to say, to hierarchically distribute how each and every layer of the society could contribute to the functioning of the nation—by eternally explaining to those who, given their specific class conditions, makeup and ascendancy, were never able to become *ready* to live in democracy. Usually, middle-class professional found themselves, as democratic connoisseurs, politically obligated to provide further explanations to those who, although active and with latent human capital, did not *yet* know or feel how to live for a professional democracy.

This constant class and gender uncertainty, however, of not being able to finally and appropriately prepare those above and below—indeed, the very condition of eternally postponing the final democratic preparation of laboring classes and the oligarchs—put the achievement of a professional democracy, and the process of becoming middle class, into question precisely because in its perpetual state of incompleteness, above all, they were not properly performing their political and democratic assignment. In short, as many professionals said, they were not doing their job. Anxious professionals therefore found themselves in disquieting position when the source of their self-definitions as a democratic governors seemed not to be working; indeed, concerned professional men and women saw themselves constantly struggling precisely because they were only sure that their class preparation and national knowledge was, at best, in endless doubt. Haunted by class and gender

anxieties, they did not know how to advise or explain to those who seemed to be, according to them, hesitant to help themselves in becoming full participants in a professional democracy. It is in this paradoxical quest to bring a professional democracy into being that these professional attempted to constitute themselves in a hierarchical classed and gendered position as democratic connoisseurs, or governors, with a never-ending political obligation to prepare, guide and explain to others how to enjoy the pleasures of democracy. By positioning themselves in a socially calibrated proximity to the “the privileged classes,” as well as to laboring classes, middle-class professionals understood themselves as being hierarchically *above* those they thought required never-ending orientation in the questions of democracy. Moreover, those close, yet antagonistic, others enabled the middle-class professionals to constitute themselves—that is, to have the opportunity to become democratic connoisseurs that were neither “those who rule” nor the “active [but] in need of guidance” laboring classes. In all, as much as the middle-class professionals were trained to promote a non-confrontational way of doing politics, in putting this political assignment into practice, the project of creating a professional democracy—as an endeavor of class and gender rule—could only take place through the structuration of antagonistic *hierarchical relations*. Indeed, this project endlessly sought to sediment a hierarchical society in which these professional men and women could not only to be distinct in relation to other social groups, as most of the recent studies on the middle class would have it, but also, and more importantly, to be democratically in charge of ruling the working classes, the peasantry *as well as* the oligarchy. That this job was essentially impossible puts into question this very

hierarchical rule. In attempting to untangle these paradoxes, professionals simultaneously attempted to create a modality of class rule by proposing what they called a middle-class democracy.

### Chapter 3: “A Revolution for a Democratic Middle Class Society.” The Political Formation of a Gendered Middle Class in Bogotá, 1958-1965

Genealogy is uniquely suited to bring to light a specific democracy’s historical attachments to and imbrications with non-democratic principles. Genealogy challenges conceits of purity: through it, particular democracies are revealed as enfolded within histories of imperialism, slavery, genocide, class dominance, or punishment and as saturated with these legacies in the present.<sup>369</sup>

The class struggle still exists; it exists more intensely in democracies.<sup>370</sup>

On Thursday, September 14, 1959, fifty-two representatives of professionals’ organizations, white-collar labor unions and small owners’ associations were eager to begin a meeting that would, they wrote in the minutes, “change the future of the middle class and the Colombian nation.”<sup>371</sup> After many months of discussion, several participants agreed upon the urgent need to organize politically what was referred to as a dispersed Colombian middle class.<sup>372</sup> Régulo Millan Puentes, a member of the

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<sup>369</sup>Wendy Brown, *Politics out of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 126, 135.

<sup>370</sup>Michael Foucault, *Remarks on Marx, Conversations with Duccio Trombadori* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 147.

<sup>371</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 3, September 1959, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, Movimiento Aliado de la Clase Media Colombiana Archive (hereafter, MOCLAMAR). In 1962, this organization changed its name to *Comité Ejecutivo Nacional de Clase Media Económica de Colombia*. And few months later it changed again to *Movimiento Aliado de la Clase Media Colombiana*. Needless to say this archive has a precarious organization. I have tried to follow the larger organization of the political movement. Some of the professional associations that participated in this meeting and in the consolidation of MOCLAM were: National Union of Accountants, Association of Doctors For Social Assistance, Association of National Nurses, Association of Colombian Dentists, among many others.

<sup>372</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 4, September 1959, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. Several other central committees were organized in other cities throughout Colombia: Medellín, Barranquilla, Pasto, and Cali. I have been able to locate records for Cundinamarca that mainly included Bogotá. And there is indeed some material regarding discussions between the

National Union of Accountants and a major activist for the creation of what would soon be called the Allied Movement of the Colombian Middle Class (Movimiento Aliado de la Clase Media de Colombia, MOCLAM), argued that it was imperative to coordinate an organization to “defend the intellectual, moral, economic and social interests of those who [were] neither capitalists nor proletarians.”<sup>373</sup> Furthermore, Anibal Castro, a member of the Association of Doctors for Social Assistance (ASMEDAS), emphasized that the organization also needed to demand “democratic rights” proportional with and according to the “political, moral and cultural level of the middle class.”<sup>374</sup> With these very general requests and demands in mind, Millan Puentes replied to Castro that an executive committee should begin political agitation, demonstrations and campaigns to reach out neither to capitalists nor proletarians but only to “professionals, employees, and small business men.”<sup>375</sup> In so doing, the movement would initiate a process of redeeming and reclaiming a democratic society by demanding distinct rights befitting their position as middle-class men in the Colombian nation.

Furthermore, the participants in this first meeting were in agreement that the Colombian middle class was experiencing a “moment of crisis”—a crisis that, above all, was manifest and plain for all to see. It was thus necessary to face “this moment

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different central city committees. Although very aware of how this middle class movement was experienced through regional categorizations, I, regretfully, focus only on Bogotá.

<sup>373</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 5, September 1959, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>374</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 4, September 1959, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. See also “Se Crea Comité Central de la Clase media en Bogotá,” *La República*, September 20, 1959, 8-9.

<sup>375</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 6, September 1959, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

of truth” by putting their brains into political action so the middle class could be well and eminently represented. These professional men concurred that there was an urgent and unavoidable need to demand a political role and a greater political representation for those who were “truly middle class.”<sup>376</sup> In order to achieve such an end, the recently founded MOCLAM, along with its *radio periódico*, sought to open spaces to interpret the “collective sentiment of the people” who were truly entitled and deserved to be grouped under the “label of middle class.” It was necessary to define for Colombian society, the government and the world, who would be considered “true men of the middle class,” so that their “voices, necessities, demands and claims could be heard clearly and unequivocally.”<sup>377</sup>

Millan Puentes, furthermore, informed those professionals in the very first meeting in 1959 that the moment of truth had come, and now, more than ever, it was time for a new group of middle-class men who, conscious and responsible of their obligations, duties, rights, and privileges, could defend the “most important class in any democratic society.”<sup>378</sup> Indeed, as middle-class men of the Colombian nation, it was their duty to call upon those who were “truly middle class for a coordinated action in defense of [their] common interests.” It was necessary to initiate a political campaign to unite the middle class and to organize their middle-class interests, lives, backgrounds, concerns, concrete aspirations, and demands for a “political, moral,

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<sup>376</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 5, September 1959, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>377</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 2, September 1959, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>378</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 6, September 1959, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

social, cultural and democratic defense.” In short, the middle class, in order to become truly middle class, needed “a redemption and a revolution.”<sup>379</sup> As a result of these political declarations, a group of professionals began to craft a middle-class manifesto as a guide for confronting the present and the immediate future. This manifesto proposed a course for a political action—indeed, for a democratic revolution—in order to create a new society. It would amount to a revolution, Álvaro Sánchez, the vice-president of MOCLAM argued, precisely because it would take place neither through a “dramatic or spectacular public rallies [*reuniones callejeras*]” nor through a “grandiloquent yet empty speeches” but only through “professional debates, intelligent discussions, meaningful and powerful ideas, peaceful deliberations, rational planning, political maturity and appropriate political behavior.”<sup>380</sup> Addressing the nation, the society, and the government, this manifesto eloquently proclaimed in 1963,

Perhaps because of our own guilty indolence nobody takes us seriously as a middle class. Big capital is represented by its own organizations and because of its influence and prestige it is able to have some say regarding public affairs. The workers [who] are organized around the powerful labor unions have the ability to deeply affect the nation. Until now the middle class has always labored in favor of the insatiable ambitions of the capitalists and the assertion of the rural and urban working classes. And we, despite the power we represent, are destined to be left to the side [*destinados al ostrantismo*]. To overcome this anonymous, unspecified, and indeterminate middle-class situation; to make ourselves present in the national life as an organized, specific, and definite class; to properly fulfill to our duties; to require the solutions for our needs and win our rights [and] have these rights properly respected ...it is inevitable that we join together to represent ourselves as a class...have our own political platform,

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<sup>379</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 9, September 1959, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>380</sup>Manifiesto: MOCLAM organismo al servicio de los intereses de la clase media se dirige al país y convoca a sus gentes para una acción coordinada en defensa de los intereses comunes, 2-3, 1963, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. This political argumentation was constantly echoed in the *radio periódico* broadcast



concrete aspirations...ours is a class representation that is not connected [*ajena a*] to any political sectarianism ...our only concern is a fundamental democratic revolution.<sup>381</sup>

This class-based campaign would comply with their notion of proper politics by avoiding “political sectarianism,” but it nevertheless envisioned a “fundamental democratic revolution” in society so that Colombia could reach into the “level of the most industrialized and powerful nations of the world.”<sup>382</sup> Moreover, the minutes the very first meeting argued that only through the redemption, promotion and renovation of democracy could these professional men bring about a political and social revolution, transforming an “undemocratic, old, disorganized, violent and traditional society of classes” into a “democratic and modern middle-class society.”<sup>383</sup>

Although several historians would quickly dismiss these discussions as empty rhetoric or the assertions of a short-lived and somewhat reactionary, political movement bound to fail, in this chapter I argue that this political movement deeply influenced the practices and meanings of democracy during the first years of the National Front. I question the enduring view of the middle class in Latin America as having little, if any, associative life: that is, the historical understanding of the middle class as politically inconsequential. These professionals wrote letters, composed poems and stories, spoke on *radio periódicos*, coordinate political meetings,

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<sup>381</sup>Manifiesto, 4, 1963, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR

<sup>382</sup> Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 9, September 1959, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. See also descripciones y notas de radio, 4, May 1963, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>383</sup> Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 6, September 1959, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

published journal of opinion and founded professional organizations in their collective struggle to organize themselves *as middle-class men*. In interrogating these activities I ask: what were the political meanings these professional men put in practice through their campaign for a middle-class democratic revolution? In all, and in contrast to social science literature that takes for granted the historical meanings of democracy and their putative relationship to a middle class, in this chapter I question how these professional men struggled to enjoy certain democratic rights in order to structure a hierarchical middle-class society. In so doing I demonstrate how, rather than opposed and irreconcilable with one another as is commonly assumed, democratic practices and hierarchical class rule were profoundly interpenetrated.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> As I hope it became apparent in chapter 2, the role of professional women in educating the laboring classes and the oligarchs was crucial in structuring a peaceful and democratic society was crucial. Unfortunately, for this chapter, as of now, my historical sources are rather thin. On MOCLAM's *radio periódico* middle-class professionals spoke to invite women to join the "middle-class task of redemption." Two professional nurses, Fanny Valencia and Rosalba Nariño, were part of the executive committee of MOCLAM. An easy and rapid understanding of this crucial role could lead us to celebrate this participation as an irreversible result of progress and development through which these women became more visible, in contrast to other historical moments, in this specific political movement. For others, it would be then easy to find sources as we take for granted the historical meanings of democracy and middle class. In contrast, I think it is crucial to see how these professionals politically organized themselves as *middle-class women* in order to campaign for a constitution of a middle-class democracy. In a couple of broadcasts of MOCLAM's *radio periódico*, Fanny Valencia invited women to "leave behind the middle-class lethargy." Very much part of a middle-class redemption movement, she said that as professional women they should perform democratic jobs according to their sex and class. If we not only want to putatively assign a middle-class agency to certain historical actors, I think it is crucial to see, as it is eloquently suggested by Fanny Valencia's invitation, how these professionals constituted themselves as middle-class women in the very process of demanding a transformation of an "old, undemocratic society of classes" into a "middle-class society." Regretfully, for this task I have not been able to find enough historical sources. Now, this also speaks to the argument of this chapter, as I want to interrogate how a middle-class political campaign was premised—as much as it sought to structure—a gender and class order. Currently, I am tracing the story of several professional organizations created during the second half of the 1960s, particularly the Asociación Femenina de Profesionales, El Colegio de Abogadas, the Asociación de Trabajadoras Sociales, the Asociación Médica Femenina, the Asociación de Mujeres Profesionales, and Asociación de Secretarias y Oficinas. Recently, I have been able to make some contacts with Georgina Ballesteros and Amanda Montejó, who have graciously agreed to grant access to their personal archives, which hopefully may prove a very important ethnographic site to see how professional women constituted themselves as middle-class women in the very process of creating a middle-class democracy.

## **The Middle Class Society Must Be Defended: Who belongs to the middle class? [Quién integra la clase media?]**

As explained in previous chapters, the consolidation of the National Front during the late 1950s sought to overcome, through gradual measures, the violence experienced during the late 1940s and 1950s. This National Front was a Liberal and Conservative power-sharing arrangement that formally endured for sixteen years. Under this agreement, the presidency was to be transferred at four-year intervals, cabinet posts were divided between the two parties, and all other elective and appointive posts were to be shared equally.<sup>385</sup> Historians have consistently argued that the National Front accord was, following a process of containment, a narrow form of consociationalism that allowed only members of the nation's traditional liberal and conservative parties to have access to the electoral and political process.<sup>386</sup> I argue that the National Front administrations reflected not only a formal power-sharing arrangement, but also a search to consolidate an *appropriate* way to do politics. As explained in previous chapters, as part of larger transnational discussion on how to create modern and democratic societies, National Front administrations (especially the liberal side) sought to modernize politics—that is, to overcome La Violencia and political bossism—by promoting the professionalization of the social

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<sup>385</sup>James Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia: The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889-1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 380.

<sup>386</sup>Jonathan Hartlyn, *The Politics of Coalition Rule in Colombia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). See also Mauricio Archila *Idas y venidas. Vueltas y revueltas. Protestas Sociales en Colombia, 1958-1990* (Bogotá: CINEP/ICANH, 2005); Daniel Pécaut, "Order and Violence: Two Sides of Colombian Stability" in Fernando J. Devoto and Torcuato S. Di Tella, *Political Culture, Social Movements and Democratic Transition in South America* (Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli), 1997; Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.); David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

and political relations among different class groups. Moreover, anxious imperial and national administrations struggled to select, train and constitute a middle class as proper political force—and not just as a transcendental *apolitical* class as we usually assume—that often functioned to strengthen the politicization of the society in general and the middle class in particular, even if those policies were an attempt to forestall the “improper” politics.<sup>387</sup> In this process, the middle class became associated with the possibility of abandoning a confrontational style of politics and imagined communist practices and, consequently, properly engaging in what was understood as a “peaceful, democratic and participatory civic culture.”<sup>388</sup> By the early 1960s, middle-class professionals became indispensable for the project of transnational rule, operating as anchors of political stability and, certainly, and as evidence that this new—and appropriate—way of doing politics was indeed working.

And yet, as I argue in the previous chapter, professional women and men reworked these transnational discourses. In attempting to educate the oligarchs and the laboring classes to experience democracy and live beyond confrontational politics, these professionals mobilized their own project of class and gender rule. In so doing, these middle-class professionals reworked their assigned democratic role in the nation, as well as redefined the very notion of proper politics.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>387</sup>Recent studies on the Cold War have argued how after World War II, Latin America experienced a politicization of everyday life. See, among others, Gilbert Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In From the Cold: Latin America 's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin American in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>388</sup>Letter from Gabriel Kaplan to Alberto Lleras Camargo, 15 March 1959, Despacho Señor Presidente, 1959, Comité de relaciones exteriores, Presidential Archive. (Hereafter PA)

<sup>389</sup>Needless to say, the political mobilization of the middle class, and the redefinition of the proper politics assigned to it, was not an isolated historical process. During the late 1950s and early 1960s,

As part of these struggles, during the late 1950s and 1960s, those middle-class professional men engaged in heated *class discussions* on why, how, or whether they were entitled to set up a political organization for the middle class—discussions that were materialized through radio speeches, social surveys, letters, telegrams and missives. Well into the first National Front administration of Alberto Lleras Camargo, MOCLAM and its executive committee were extremely preoccupied with discussing what was considered “the problems, desires, aspirations, frustrations and concerns of the most important class in the nation.”<sup>390</sup> In doing so, MOCLAM engaged in pedagogical strategies and persuasion tactics that became crucial to constituting of a political movement as a gendered middle class. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, several members of MOCLAM argued that the middle class needed, above all, a political redemption—a rallying cry that was soon echoed through various venues. MOCLAM contended that the middle class had, if anything, committed several “demoralizing political mistakes,” putting its members in a state of perpetual crisis. Indeed, its middle-class members could not find—let alone reclaim—themselves as middle class precisely because they had perpetually felt “out

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this process was manifested in the increase union membership that grew from 250.000 to 700.000 between 1959 and 1965 and from 5.5 percent to 15.4 of the economically active population. This increase would prove to be a historical peak. Similarly, the National Front was the “golden age” of gentlemen’s agreements between the leadership of the state and the corporative trade association such as the ANDI (industrialists), FENALCO (merchants) ASOBANCARIA (Banks) and SAC (large landowners). See Eduardo Saenz, Miguel Urrutia, and Palacios, 171. Although with few exceptions, we are yet to write a history of the elites in Colombia.

<sup>390</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 7, September 1959, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. It is worth noting that this middle-class organization also played a very important role in organizing different committees in local neighborhoods, such as the Conjunto Residencial Antonio Nariño.

of joint...politically and socially.”<sup>391</sup> In 1962, Rafael Viera Moreno, the executive secretary of the Central Committee of MOCLAM, went even further by claiming that, perhaps above all, the middle-class men could neither redeem nor reclaim themselves politically or socially because “by now everyone believe[d] they [were] middle class.” Such a demoralizing political mistake, Viera Moreno said, could only lead the middle class into a “political limbo”—that is, into an eternal state of oblivion and neglect—precisely because socially *everyone* wanted to be middle class and, thus, *no one* could potentially have the right to politically “speak for the middle class.”<sup>392</sup> Therefore, MOCLAM argued, the middle class had suffered a “phenomenon of popularization.” The only way to redeem the middle class was by determining socially who was truly middle class, as well as politically naming who could speak for what was considered the most important class in the nation. This task was quite important precisely because this process would not only depopularize the middle class but also, and most importantly, redeem and reclaim the political belonging to and longing for a middle class. It was a redemption that could only take place, moreover, by overcoming a tradition or a past of demoralizing political mistakes, lack of class consciousness and political oblivion.<sup>393</sup>

As part of this process of redemption, MOCLAM engaged in several modes political persuasion to succeed in such a “difficult task.” Trying to reaching out to “those who [were] middle class,” in late 1959 the executive committee agreed to

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<sup>391</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 12, September 1959, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>392</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 7, March 1962, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>393</sup>Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 21, February 1961, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. *La República*, “Comité Central de la Clase Media en Bogotá,” September 21, 1959.

send some letters to major newspapers in Bogotá. The goal was to mobilize middle-class men political and defend their social interests. Indeed, it invited men to get involved in politics in order to defend their class as part of a political campaign of gendered class politics. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, some of these newspapers published excerpts of these political missives written by several members of the MOCLAM executive committee. *La República*, a conservative newspaper, for instance, published an excerpt of the letter Millan Puentes wrote in December 1959,

Dear middle-class colleagues: there is nothing more logical [than] for this conglomerate to recognize our interests. Although we are a leadership class, and even the spiritual and material force of the nation, we have been indifferent to knowing who we are and what we are capable of...and because of that we have been located within the social, political and economic organization as a sandwich [sic], that is, we are neither from above nor from below. This is so true that we continue to be a dispersed class that has fallen into anarchy, in which every member of this class lives by forgetting the interest of those akin to him. We vegetate believing that we are big, even when we are so small: in other words we have nothing to satisfy our basic needs, we are hungry indeed, and we keep up appearances so nobody knows we are hungry. Given this situation, laws are always for the benefit of the lower and upper classes, but never for those who bring democracy, justice and equality...we must be ready to reclaim and obtain greater social, economic and political affirmation, and defend our rights and the rights of our sons.<sup>394</sup>

And yet, in order to defend these rights and reclaim a political place in the nation, it was first necessary to delineate—in gender and class terms—those who were truly entitled to speak as/for a middle class. In January 1962, along with the continuous submission of letters to newspapers, the Executive Committee of MOCLAM agreed to commission Rafael Viera Moreno to develop a general census of the Colombian middle class. Viera Moreno, an accountant with far-reaching experience in social

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<sup>394</sup>“Comité Central de la Clase Media en Bogotá, 5, *La República*, December 11, 1959. My emphasis.

statistics, was put in charge of the task of providing a “very good idea of who, in social terms, compose[d] and made up Colombia’s middle-class.”<sup>395</sup> Although it has proven impossible to find any statistical tabulation, Viera Moreno composed a letter to be sent out to state offices, bank agencies, some industries and private companies to solicit data. Along with this letter, Viera Moreno attached a form to be filled out by “those who [felt] compelled to do so.”<sup>396</sup> Although it is unclear whether these letters and forms were ever sent out,<sup>397</sup> the very concern with characterizing the middle class in statistical terms worked as a way to persuade middle-class men to overcome a tradition of demoralizing political mistakes and, instead, struggle for a political right and entitlement to speak collectively as a middle class. In the letter, Rafael Viera Moreno encouraged respondents to answer “honestly, consciously, faithfully and, [above all] in a masculine way,” as they would begin integrating an organization speaking for the middle class.<sup>398</sup> Viera asked the readers to give detailed answers to questions about their “profession, specific job, position in the office, education, instruction and previous position held in other companies or state

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<sup>395</sup>Comisiones de trabajo, Comité Central, Bogotá, 11-14, January 1962, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. Rafael Viera Moreno published a small statistical work in the late 1940s and it was precisely this experience that would help, it was argued, for the development of the middle class census. See Rafael Viera Moreno “Situación económica de las clases medias,” *Mes Financiero Económico* 6, 7 (1946): 29-41. I will keep looking to see if I will ever be able to find any tabulation of these forms. In early 1970s, another middle-class organization, National Unity of the Colombia Middle Class (UNCLAMECOL), was founded. Although not related to MOCLAM, they shared several political demands and argumentations. UNCLAMECOL also attempted to do a middle-class census during the late 1970s.

<sup>396</sup>Comisiones de trabajo, Comité Central, Bogotá, 11-14, January 1962, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>397</sup>Ibid. So far I have not been able to locate these forms and letters beyond the MOCLAMAR. Similarly, I have not been able to see if men as well as women filled those out.

<sup>398</sup>Ibid.



institutions...residence and family composition.” Through this survey, according to Viera, it would be possible to know who the members of the middle class were, what they did, what they wanted and, most of all, who wanted to be part of MOCLAM.<sup>399</sup> More importantly, Viera Moreno attempted to persuade the readers by inviting them to believe that the political consequences of the survey could become a reality. Pondering these implications, he elaborated five main avenues by which “a middle-class can become the center of the nation.”

1. Only through a survey will the middle class achieve the goals and objectives proposed by MOCLAM.
2. Through a survey we will be able to know who the members of the middle class are, what they do, how they live, who wants to be part of MOCLAM
3. It is the only way the government, the nation and the society will pay attention to our rights.
4. It is the only way to unite, communicate and raise awareness among the members of the middle class
5. It is the only way to show the precise plan of action and appropriate orientation we are struggling for without demagoguery—the manipulation of public beliefs just to gain power or popularity.<sup>400</sup>

Equally important, in 1962 MOCLAM founded a radio periódico suggestively called “the middle class hour at your service.”<sup>401</sup> Although the radio periódico

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<sup>399</sup>Ibid.

<sup>400</sup>Ibid.

<sup>401</sup>Comisiones de trabajo, Comité Central, Bogotá, 28-35, March 1962, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. This radio periódico was broadcast in two radio stations: Radio Continental and La Voz de Victor, on Saturdays and Sundays between 8 and 9, from 1962 to 1964 and then from 8:30 to 9:30, 1964 through 1966. I do not know if the radio periódico always was broadcast on these stations, as in several cases these radio periódicos changed stations. And, perhaps, these programs were on air after 1966 but MOCLAMAR has no information available after that year. La Voz de Victor and Radio Continental were privately own commercial radio stations founded in the 1930s with the emergence of the March Revolution by Alfonso López Pumarejo. The former was specifically owned by a Manuel J Gaitán, an enthusiastic liberal. Some sources suggest that the Middle Class Hour at Your Service got on air because it promoted how to overcome the problem of violence in the nation. In a report of the radio periódico, it was said to MOCLAM, “a program like

initially consisted only of newspaper articles read aloud, it was increasingly dedicated to ongoing discussions of how to overcome the passive tradition of the middle class and thus constitute a political organization for the middle class. Jorge Méndez Calvo and Francisco Ricaute, professional accountants who hosted the hour-long program, on February 19, 1962, called upon their middle-class listeners to become committed to their class.<sup>402</sup> Méndez Calvo and Ricaute expounded extensively upon the allegedly demoralizing political mistakes made in the past and a middle-class tradition of political passivity, and began to narrate very short anecdotes that could resonate with the experiences of middle-class listeners. In one of those stories broadcast on April, 12 1962, Ricaute described the tale of unnamed men from a forgotten class who had no idea who they really were.<sup>403</sup> Taking place in the recent past, the story depicted the everyday experiences of those who, although unnamed, were “dedicated professionals” who complied with the law, and above all, made the country move forward. Despite paying such an important role, these unnamed men did not see a clear path to find their “true interests,” nor were they compelled to do so. Indeed, they did not want to have a name. Some weeks later, still using anecdotes with the similar tropes and characters, Ricaute argued that, although

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these [*sic*] speak to those who are now asleep and get preoccupied with real problems of the country.” See Comisiones de trabajo e informes externos, Comité Central, Bogotá, 11, November 1962, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. In several cases the owners of the stations and the political views broadcast in the radio *periódico* could be in contradiction. In this case, it seems, they shared the possibility that a middle class could bring “peace to the nation.” See Gustavo Pérez Ángel, *La Radio del Tercer Milenio: Caracol 50 años* (Bogotá: Editorial Nomos S.A., 1998).

<sup>402</sup> Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria de cultura, Comité Central, Bogotá, 3, February 19 1962, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. Like the archive as a whole, the transcripts of radio *periódico* programs are incomplete, and most of them have neither specific air dates nor page numbers.

<sup>403</sup> Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria de cultura, Comité Central, Bogotá, April 12 1962, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

it was the principal base for a democratic social structure, the middle class was politically unnamed and, more to the point, had a “strong lack of class consciousness.” These examples of the past, continued Ricaute, affected the middle class in a circular fashion, since the lack of a class consciousness meant that nobody could claim their interests as—or as belonging to—the middle class. And since no interest could or membership could be claimed, by implication anybody would be entitled to speak for or about the middle class. Consequently, a representative, middle-class consciousness was difficult to raise.<sup>404</sup>

Perhaps because of this constructed tradition, MOCLAM invited radio listeners to send letters explaining what specifically could define this important yet unknown class and who was part of it.<sup>405</sup> Luis Carlos Gutiérrez attempted to inform listeners by contending that the middle class was composed of “several social” groups. This did not mean, he cautioned, that the middle class was an amorphous group of men. Rather, it was a problem of “political insensitivity” and “deracination.” In the political goal of becoming a named class, it was necessary to clarify and (re)appropriate the boundaries and the definitions of those who did not know where they belonged.<sup>406</sup> As he eloquently remarked in 1962,

If we must, and only if we must, put everything in one sentence, we could say that the middle class consists of those men who do not know where they belong...listeners. If you do not know whether you belong to the peasants and working class and you do not belong to the capitalist one...you are part of the

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<sup>404</sup>Ibid.

<sup>405</sup>Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central, Bogotá, 3, March 1962, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>406</sup>Ibid.

very much forgotten middle class... a middle class that acts between the rich and the poor and never knows who they are.<sup>407</sup>

Perhaps as a response to Ricaute's call, MOCLAM received numerous letters, telegrams and messages with requests to talk, write and debate about the middle-class, the importance of supporting a middle-class political organization, and the politicization of the middle class in the present of the nation and the future of Colombia. While they agreed upon the importance of creating a middle-class political organization, professional men often disagreed sharply over the precise meanings of that political organization. Fernando Cortés, a professional working for COLSEGUROS, for instance, recalled in oral history how after the airing of this aforementioned radio show his life took a different path. If before, Cortés remembered, the daily routine of going to work as an insurance agent was pointless, now with all the talk about the middle class, the radio periódico made him wonder who he really was. His life, he said, took on a new meaning as "he and his peers"—as a middle class—became conscious of their responsibilities, discovered who they could be, and moreover, became aware of the possibility to go beyond their "home and office."<sup>408</sup>

Drawing on their own assigned role as proper political governors, these male-dominated class discussions—usually translated into letters, radio speeches, messages and telegrams sent to the radio show and MOCLAM—became a space to advance a political campaign for what professional men referred to as the most

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid. According to the transcripts on March 1962, the letter should be sent to the office of the Central Committee of MOCLAM in Bogotá located at Avenida Caracas, No 22-45.

<sup>408</sup> Fernando Cortés, interviewed with author, Bogotá, Colombia, November 2004, tape recording.

important political task: the redemption of the middle class. Indeed, in order to claim political legitimacy to speak as/for the middle class, this redemption could take place by “saving the middle class from oblivion, nothingness and unconsciousness.” In the very process of exercising this political practice these professionals concretely sought to define, occupy, demand and struggle for a hierarchical political and gendered position as middle-class men.

As part of this process, professional men engaged in writing about a past not as a way to justify a political project that was already in place, but rather, and perhaps more importantly, as the very ground on which their political subjectivities as men were conjoined with the institutionalization of a middle-class collective self.<sup>409</sup>

Although they were often contentious, most of the letters sent to MOCLAM and the radio periódico created a narrative about a past as a training and learning space constituting the political activities and definitions of what these professionals men could potentially become in the present and in the future as a middle class—political practices that should demarcate both the limits and the possibilities of what could be said, done and recognized as belonging to and as a part of a longing for a gendered middle class.

Specifically, in writing these letters, professional men put forward two main interlocking tropes to assert a middle-class politics—an utopian narrative where, or through which, a future time and place would hold the promise of a new political

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<sup>409</sup>In this point, I draw upon Talal Asad’s elaboration about the tradition as a discursive construction. In his understanding of tradition, and contrary to common notion of invented tradition by Eric Hobsbawm, Asad argues that the past is the very ground through which the subjectivity and self – understanding of a tradition adherents are constituted. See Talal Asad *Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); David Scott and Charles Hirschkind, *Powers of the Secular Modern. Talal Asad and His Interlocutors* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); See also Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of a Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

order in which a middle-class society could indeed materialize. As a political imaginary, it was a time and a place that could actually come into being by recollecting and reminiscing, as well as forgetting, the traces that connected an imagined middle-class “undemocratic tradition” with a new present and potential future defined as democratic. This use and recounting of the past was not merely a set of symbols, idioms and ideas that attempted to justify present practices. Nor was it a set of unchanging prescriptions to be referenced in the present. Rather, I argue, the narrating of a contested past tradition enabled a political campaign to create a (new) middle class—and in the process, redeem, reclaim, redefine and practice what it meant, politically, to be part of that “new democratic middle class.”<sup>410</sup>

In 1963, for instance, José Marulanda, who signed his missive to the radio periódico as a true middle-class accountant, wrote a lengthy letter to “humbly collaborate in the crusade of middle-class redemption.”<sup>411</sup> In the past he had felt disoriented, misunderstood and isolated, wrote Marulanda, because there was neither an association that could represent his interests nor a movement to speak for his rights and obligations.<sup>412</sup> According to him, this disorientation was precisely the result of an “ancestral legacy of the middle class’s past.” Addressing an imagined

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<sup>410</sup>Interestingly enough, some the argumentations, narratives and ideas made it—although in an unrecognized, and perhaps plagiarized—into the middle-class manifesto.

<sup>411</sup>Letter from José Marulanda to Secretaria General, February 21 1963, Correspondencia externa, Comité Central Bogotá, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid. There was a middle-class organization in the late 1930s called the Action Committee of the Colombian Middle Class. See J.M Quintana Pereyra *La Redención de la Clase Media* (Bogotá: Editorial ABC, 1936). For me this is, indeed, one of the major political manifestos of the middle class in Colombia. It also shows that middle-class political organizations were very active before World War II. I have not been able to trace any connection between this organization and MOCLAM. Of course, my argument here is not to evaluate how accurate these traditions were, but rather how that tradition endowed the creation of a political movement as a middle class during the 1960s.

male audience, Marulanda continued by claiming that this legacy had produced a middle class with no class consciousness, whose men had only been alienated from their own class: that is, they had “rejected themselves as men of the middle class.” Now, in the present and in the future, Marulanda was envisioning an organization that could put the middle class onto a path of redemption, thus overcoming those “cowardly errors and sins of the past.”<sup>413</sup>

Other professionals, however, begged to differ as to whether such a middle-class tradition ever existed. In what may be considered as a sort of response to Marulanda, in 1963 “another man of the middle class,” wrote a short letter arguing that political redemption was necessary not because there had been an absence of middle-class consciousness, but rather because there had been no middle class at all in Colombian history. Jairo de Jesús Trujillo, a doctor from the Instituto de Seguros Sociales, wrote that if a middle class had indeed existed, the Colombia past would look strikingly different, because if middle-class men had arrived “at the right time and the right moment,” Colombia could have avoided experiencing La Violencia.<sup>414</sup> Imagining a past with or without middle-class men was of political utility to advance and legitimize the formalization of a middle-class organization that could properly play the very role that it had not played in Colombia’s past. To belong to and long

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<sup>413</sup> Ibid. According to Marulanda, historically the middle class had merely been a “millionaire... a rich class... a rich class of aspirations.” If we were to see the “division of classes according to aspirations and appearances,” the middle class would be, he wrote, “at the top of the social division.” Indeed, these appearances had overwhelmed the middle class to the point to become “an ancestral legacy” that forced middle class members to be silenced, to experience a life of sacrifices—“full time life of sacrifices.”

<sup>414</sup> Letter from Jairo de Jesús Trujillo to Secretaria General, November 1963, Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

for a middle class in the future to come was, in contrast to an imagined past tradition, “to be the buffer of the society...the buffer between rich and poor...the peacekeeper...the democratic promoter.”<sup>415</sup>

And yet, other listeners and writers sharply opposed this argument. Francisco Henao, a white-collar employee in a private company, shared the political preoccupation with founding a middle-class organization, but he contended that the main problem was that, up to that point in Colombian history, “a middle class [had] only been a middle class.”<sup>416</sup> Arguing teleologically, he claimed that the historical evolution and progress of Colombia would necessarily move the middle class “to be part of those at the top of the society.” But precisely because Colombia’s history had not followed that path of progress and evolution, given the Colombian elites’ reluctance to “allow anybody into their spheres,” it was necessary to form an organization that could help speed the process by “fulfilling” these class aspirations, allowing the middle class to become more like “those at the top.” Only then, Henao wrote, would the middle class free itself from its ancestral legacy, precisely because those aspirations could be met by becoming “like those from the elites.”

Others questioned this legitimization of a middle-class political organization by becoming more like elites. During the late 1950s and 1960s it was precisely this political argumentation of trying to be more like elites—an ancestral legacy, as some professionals called it—that became a constitutive yet excluded Other defining the possibility of a middle-class redemption. If there was a deracinated middle

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Letter from Francisco Henao to Secretaria General, March 21, 1962, Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR



classiness—that is to say, a class easily “forgotten” by the nation, a class destined to be “buried into oblivion” by a society and a class with “no men in its constituencies to speak up”—it was precisely because “pretentious, insensitive, inauthentic and careless men” had, in the past, limited themselves to mimicking the elites.<sup>417</sup> If the middle class could merely become part of the elites, Fernando Castaño wrote in his letter, there was no need for political organization, since the elites themselves were powerfully represented in the life of the nation. As Castaño elaborated, these middle-class men that wanted to be considered part of the elites should be excluded from masculine membership in the true middle class, as they had only served as “promoters of the exploitation of the poor by the rich.”

Although it is unclear whether this was a specific response to the letter from Francisco Henao, during several broadcasts Regulo Millan Puentes and Ovidio Rincón criticized this form of political legitimization, as it doomed the middle class to “political misery.”<sup>418</sup> Other letters, moreover, voiced the same criticism and elaborated further arguments about how supporting a middle-class political organization that wanted to mimic the elites would be a mistake of terrible political consequences. Hernán Sandoval, a professional accountant working for the Contraloría General de la República, pondered the claim that the middle class in the past had been “socially selfish” at worst, and “politically individualistic” at best. One of the major manifestations of those “crimes of the middle-class past,” he wrote in 1964, was precisely the “false appearances and embedded social climbing” that

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<sup>417</sup> Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central Bogotá, March 1963, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

inevitably had forced its class members to be in a position of political inferiority in relationship to other social classes.<sup>419</sup>

Jaime Montoya, a “concerned and desperate man of the suffering middle class,” wrote a rather extensive description of the middle-class situation. In his letter, it is quite clear how an “undemocratic middle-class tradition” became a matter of crucial political utility in constituting themselves as middle-class men. Again, this tradition came to constitute a position of Otherness that simultaneously legitimized and questioned the very possibility of organizing a political association that would defend what they considered to be (new) middle-class rights, obligations, privileges and interests. Montoya argued that in the past, the middle class had lived in a state of slavery. Very aware of how little sense it would make to talk about slavery in Colombia during the recent past, he wrote in late 1962 that this slavery had not been “barbaric,” but rather “very contemporary.”<sup>420</sup> To consolidate a male political role required professionals to depend neither on a “heartless state master and insensitive elite” nor on “laboring classes who take good care of themselves.”<sup>421</sup> After years of slavery—narrated as a past tradition in which the middle-class men had been “social climbers toward the elites and servants of the laboring classes with no compensation for their own [middle class] interests,” it was time for the “great men of the middle-class” to win their “just right” to inhabit certain political and social positions in the

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<sup>419</sup> Letter from Hernán Sandoval to Secretaria General, September 7 1963, Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central Bogotá, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>420</sup> Letter from Jaime Montoya to Secretaria General, November 15 1963, Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

nation. Previously, afraid of public scandal and convinced that their interests were either those of the elites or those of the lower classes, these professionals had produced a class silence that only served to make the middle class politically available for “corrupt politicians who [were] willing to promise whatever was necessary.”<sup>422</sup>

By attempting to create an undemocratic middle-class tradition—constructing the middle class as composed of selfish, individualistic social climbers, but also silenced, enslaved, unheeded and unconscious men—these respondents were engaging in a debate over the structure of an organization that could politically authorize who could speak democratically for the middle class. In some of the very first radio broadcasts of “The Middle Class Hour at Your Service,” during February 1962, Francisco Ricaute explained how belonging to a political organization that would speak for the middle class depended on breeching the divide between an internal life and external sphere—a class consciousness defined as the relationship between each middle-class male individual and the life of those who shared the social space to which they belonged.”<sup>423</sup> By using a teleological, gendered narrative of a past tradition, he now envisioned a belonging to, and identification with, a middle class as the very process of moving away from a “middle-class, undemocratic legacy...and a past of cowardly behavior” forward a “virile...present [and] future.” In so doing, these members of the middle class could finally experience a putatively

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central, Bogotá, 3, March 1962, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR

masculine present defined as “socially conscious and politically active.”<sup>424</sup> In this (new) middle class, these professional men could utilize their “knowledge and professionalism to give opinions about society and political matters of the nation,” as well as to speak up “for the interests of [their] middle class.” Indeed, Ricaute insisted on an organization through which they could both defend their professional dignity in a manly fashion and claim the right to occupy a middle-class position. Now, in contrast to a constructed feminized alternative tradition, the middle class had to be integrated by virile men who could speak and stand for their own class. In order to do so, it was necessary to perform as a middle-class men by creating an organization that could—“in a manly way and constructively”—confront “those who [were] the owners of the capital, which is a minority, and those who [did] not have anything, which is the mass of workers and peasants.”<sup>425</sup>

By constituting this imagined feminized tradition, these professionals were able to envision a struggle to structure a society where they, as middle-class men, could become recognizable as “the center of the nation.”<sup>426</sup> Very much articulating transnational discourses about the importance of a middle class in achieving democracy and peace, middle-class professionals not only supported certain policies or presidential programs, but more importantly, advanced a political campaign to characterized the middle-class past as a perpetual condition of “oblivion and nothingness.” In this process, these professionals were now authorized to consolidate

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<sup>424</sup> Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 7-9, September 1963, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid.

a different society—a masculinized one, above all—where the “middle class [could] live for the nation...and the nation could live for the middle class.”<sup>427</sup>

Thus after many years in the “darkness of ignorance,” the true middle class could only emerge by gaining political self-recognition and recognition from others in society. Sigifredo Vallejo, a member of the National Union of Accountants, argued that it was not so difficult to fight for recognition of the middle class in the various political spheres of the nation.<sup>428</sup> Carlos Varela, a member of the ASMEDAS, however, sharply disagreed. For him, it was precisely this putative easiness that did not allow the middle class to gain proper political recognition. This assumption, moreover, would lead many to think, again, that “anybody could do what middle-class men do for the nation.”<sup>429</sup> In his succinct but very telling letter, he asked the potential (male) reader to place himself in a “hypothetical moment.” Imagine, he asked in 1963, a nation with no professionals in sight—a nation with no doctors, no architects, no accountants, no agronomists, no sociologists, no dentists. How, he asked, was the nation to work without the middle class? One could easily say, Varela continued, that a “worker could build a building but never design one as architects do...a businessman could have money and know how to spend it but never know how to do the professional accounting...a peasant could own the land and work it but never know how to make it productive as agronomists do...a construction foreman may know how to assign tasks to workers on the construction site but never

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 4, August 1964, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>429</sup> Letter from Carlos Varela to Secretaria General, October 21 1963, Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central Bogotá, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR

know how to plan as engineers do... a *charlatan* could prescribe drugs but never take full care of patients as doctors do.”<sup>430</sup> Thus, the recognition of the middle class was difficult to achieve, he argued, precisely because without a middle class, a nation could only be destined to live “a hypothetical moment” where professionals did not exist. As he wrote in his 1963 letter (and as would be reproduced, without acknowledgement, in the middle-class manifesto),

From the middle class emerged not only the best brains that feed the administrative activities of the nation but also the development of public and private activities. The most dedicated activities of the state are run by middle-class professionals, the administration of justice, the public order, the accounting of private and public companies, the heavy work of several banks, the design of the buildings of the nation, our nurses and doctors take care of the sick...in every productive sphere the presence of the middle class is felt...the middle class is the human group characterized by an eminent intellectual capacity, endless dedication to work and the compliance and respect for the norms.<sup>431</sup>

And in the middle class manifesto was added,

We understand. It is indispensable to advocate, with a sense of class, for our middle class, and in harmony with other class spheres and not in a state of combat with them. The bosses must understand that their security depends on our tranquility...to be middle class is to make urgent the transformation of the Colombian society without the problems many of the elite have when trying to do so, since the middle class does not stick to traditional interests...to be middle class is to make urgent transformations without the problems of the working class and the peasants, who have not yet had the opportunity to consider their unthinking demands. To be middle class is not to disdain the businessman who put his capital to work socially ...To be middle class is to understand the problems of the proletarian. To be middle class is to speak with one voice, because now the middle class can see more clearly its destiny and its future.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> Manifesto, 4-5, 1963, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR

## **From Redemption to Revolution—The Middle Class Liberation Movement and Professional Colonialism**

Although other historians might only see metaphors and meaningless rhetoric in these statements, I argue that these contested retellings of a constructed, feminized middle-class history became instrumental as an illustration and a political Other that was constantly cited in phallocratic class discussions, debates, letters, radio speeches, projects and campaigns in the campaign to create a middle-class democratic society. Furthermore, these political practices, arguments and democratic demands were crucial in the constitution of what came to be known, during the late 1950s and 1960s, as the *Middle-Class Liberation Movement*. Although never a formal organization, this liberation movement was a political project that emerged through the intense discussions, struggles, debates and everyday political practices among professionals who, above all, shared similar occupational experiences, since most, if not all, were subjected to selection and training in transnational and state institutions such as the Organization of American States, the United Nations, the United States Foreign Offices, CARE, ICT, the Federación Colombiana de Cafeteros and several other state institutions.<sup>433</sup> Indeed, as shown in the previous chapter, these professionals shared experiences when attempting to educate both the elites and the laboring classes on how to live in a democratic and peaceful society. Frustrated and experiencing a collective deception, these agronomists, architects, accountants and

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<sup>433</sup> As Colombia witnessed, between 1958 and 1965, a 111 percent increase in public and primary education and a 537 percent increase private primary schools, and secondary education grew by 209 percent, as well as a sharp expansion in the founding of private schools and the creation of new professional curriculums, several professional associations became extremely active in finding venues and sources to formalize the role of their various memberships—accountants, dentists, doctors, nurses and social workers among others. James Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 342. Aline Helg, *Civilizer le Peuple et former elites: L'éducation en Colombie, 1918-1957* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1984); See also Carmen Elisa Flórez, *La transición Demográfica en Colombia* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 2000)

rural extensionists began to lobby members of congress, to send hundred of letters to presidents and state functionaries and to write petitions to government officials—all demanding legislation in favor of what they considered to be a middle-class liberation movement.

More specifically, this middle-class liberation movement emerged as a project responding to what some professionals considered to be the political limitations of an organization such as MOCLAM. In 1961, a number of professionals composed a letter of constitution arguing that, if a middle class should “live for the nation...and the nation [should] live for the middle class,” its representative political organization could not just claim for a class redemption.<sup>434</sup> Although in constant dialogue with MOCLAM, this middle-class liberation movement also struggled for “a democratic revolution” in the Colombian society and the nation. This revolution would be difficult to ignore, some professionals argued, because it would take place only through democratic struggle.<sup>435</sup>

As part of a democratic political project that sought to educate the oligarchies to become the elites of the nation, professionals found themselves frustrated—in gender and class terms—at not being able to succeed in that difficult democratic assignment. The middle-class liberation movement was an alternative and simultaneous classed and gendered campaign to untangle those frustrations at not

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<sup>434</sup> Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 7-9, September 1963, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. See also, “Carta abierta a la nación,” c 1961, Middle Class Liberation Movement Archive (hereafter, MCLMAR). Fernando Agudelo, a very active member of this movement, keeps a large, although very disorganized, archive of the movement. I will be forever thankful to him for allowing me to work with this material. I will always be grateful for our eternal disagreements as well. He also suggested other members of the movement who have graciously granted access to their personal archives.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid. According to some citations and sources, it seems a similar movement was happening in Mexico and Argentina.



being able, as several professional argued throughout the 1960s, to do their job. Now, I would argue, as the oligarchs were seen as not becoming proper elites in order to “eliminate the political bossism of the past” and establish a peaceful and stable nation, these men, in order to become true middle-class professional men, needed to change “a traditional, elitist, oligarchical, restricted, unequal society of classes” into “a more democratic [one]...with the middle class *at the head of the society*.”<sup>436</sup> In order to do so, a “true and democratic revolution” would need to take place that would legitimize as leaders those men who, on the one hand, “really [had] the mental capacity to understand a democratic revolution,” and, on the other, had nothing else in mind than “to replace a disorder with order, exchange violence for peace, move the society from backwardness to progress...[and] replace particular interests with the interests of the nation as a whole.”<sup>437</sup>

Fernando Agudelo, a very active member of this liberation movement, recalled in his oral history that he began coordinating meetings to talk about “professional issues” with several friends from the Instituto de Crédito Territorial (ICT) and other local state institutions.<sup>438</sup> Usually after work, he remembered, they started organizing political get-togethers in a downtown café and at colleagues’ houses, since they felt there were “very important concerns in [their] lives as professionals.”<sup>439</sup> Among these, Fernando argued, was that, as the letter of the movement’s constitution reiterated, neither the elites nor the laboring classes should

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid. My emphasis.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Fernando Agudelo, interviewed with author, Bogotá, Colombia, March 2005, tape recording.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

be at the center of the leadership of the nation. After encountering those above and those below as part of their democratic political assignment, these professionals argued that the former—the oligarchs—suffered too much from “undemocratic patterns,” and the latter—the laboring classes—had “a lot of human potential” but were “not ready for democracy yet.” Thus, inevitably, it seems, middle-class professionals needed to be at the head of the nation if, Fernando wrote in several unpublished papers, democracy were indeed to function.

But in order to create this “form of democracy”—that is, a middle-class society—the liberation movement needed to create appropriate conditions. Fernando recalled how in the very first meeting in the early 1960s, the point of discussion was that this form of democracy would face many obstacles before it could become a reality. Furthermore, during our conversation, he felt compelled to bring out a paper he wrote then to demonstrate what “was really happening at the beginning of the movement.”<sup>440</sup> This paper, suggestively entitled “Gringo Colleagues,” argued that the major obstacle to democracy was “the so-called country of the north: the United States.” According to his unpublished paper, the U.S. and democracy were “a contradiction in terms,” not only because a country could not be democratic when it attempted to impose its “will on others for monetary profits,” but also, and for Fernando more importantly, because “the United States [did] not let [them] be democratic.”<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> Fernando Agudelo, “Colegas gringos,” c1962, 12, FAPAR.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

While we were rereading this unpublished paper, Agudelo was eager to add “a couple of points to make things clearer.”<sup>442</sup> We always heard, he said, that the United States was the “father of professionalism, scientific progress and democracy.” But how could it be so? According to Agudelo, other professional colleagues had discussions on how this way of viewing the United States was indeed “superficial.” “They were the father of nothing,” Fernando eloquently insisted, since professionals were the result of historical processes and not because “they came here.” Professionalization was a natural result, he elaborated, of national progress and thus made the “need for more democracy” inevitable, which simultaneously required more professionals. Thus, he concluded, the United States was not the father of or model for Colombia’s middle class. For him, this was a “sophism of distraction” to keep the national professional “disoriented” and under the “weight of the United States.”<sup>443</sup>

And yet, argued Fernando, one of the main political campaigns of the middle class liberation movement was precisely to invite “professionals to be aware of this sophism of distraction.” It was common, he wrote in his unpublished paper in the early 1960s, to see how middle- class professionals in Colombia did not see the “gringos as colleagues” but rather as “unreachable superior experts.”<sup>444</sup> Offering some examples to demonstrate his point, he wrote that middle-class professionals could not become a democratic force precisely because they only wanted to “show deference to the gringos.” In contrast, the middle-class liberation movement wanted

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<sup>442</sup> Fernando Agudelo, interviewed by author, Bogotá, Colombia, March 2005, tape recording.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

<sup>444</sup> Fernando Agudelo, “Colegas gringos,” c1962, 8, MCLMAR.

to “remove those thoughts and sentiments,” making others aware that there was no need to “show deference,” since there was nothing to “envy from the gringos in our professional quality.”<sup>445</sup>

As part of this middle-class liberation movement, furthermore, some professionals began to organize what was soon institutionalized as “round tables” in offices, homes or cafes, as well as publishing newsletters and bulletins summarizing the main points discussed in those male-dominated round tables in order to inform “professional men about the middle-class liberation movement.”<sup>446</sup> Through these discussions, debates and deliberations, they envisioned and even demanded the materialization of a middle-class democratic society. To do so, it was imperative to initiate a manly struggle to seek and reclaim “national professional sovereignty.”<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid. In 1961, for instance, the recently formed and very active professional organization of sociologists began to intensify the discussion about the protection of national and professional intelligence. By using the role of best governors in society, some professionals demanded certain changes “in how things are taken care of in the nation.” In the same year, an anonymous sociologist sent a letter to Orlando Fals Borda, a sociologist trained in the United States who played a pivotal role in the consolidation of sociology as a profession in Colombia during the late 1950s. In the missive, the anonymous sociologist complained that after “studying so hard [*quemándose las pestañas*] to play an important function in the guidance of the nation, [they] were still depending on the gringos to do so.” Today, he continued arguing, it was not possible, or at least not prudent or recommendable, to plan the future of the nation without the intervention of the “Colombian sociologists,” since those who merely made the policies “away from the reality of Colombia” were not able to foresee the “cultural, social and ethical conditions of the Colombian people.” Some sociologists were also part of this middle-class liberation movement.

<sup>446</sup> Editorial in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 1 May 1961, MCLMAR. Sometimes, this newsletter appears under the title *Boletín al servicio de los profesionales del estado*. These newsletters were published in precarious conditions. According to Agudelo, they got together to put everything in writing using typewriters and then made several copies to be distributed in offices where several members of the movement worked. According to Agudelo, the movement was well received among professionals. And in 1965, he said, there were “plenty of professionals” involved in the movement in several state offices. And yet, on several occasions he was happy to tell me that often he ended up writing more than one section of the newsletter. The frequency of the publication, needless to say, was always an issue. As far as I can tell, this publication lasted from 1961 to 1966, but I have information until early 1965. As I will explain later, some of the members of this movement eventually began joining more radical political movements.

<sup>447</sup> Israel Guerrero, “Nuestra lucha” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, May 1961, MCLMAR.

This struggle could only take place by becoming new professional middle-class men who were *liberated* from what was often suggestively referred to as “professional colonialism [*coloniaje profesional*].” This form of colonialism, it was argued, had destined the middle class to a state of “undemocratic perpetual dependency upon the United States with respect to the affairs of the Colombian nation.” In what seems to have been one of the very first newsletters issued as a result of these round tables, an architect named Israel Guerrero published an editorial discussing the role of the United States as a central force of what professional men were assigned to do and the role they should play “in a changing society.” Guerrero detailed, furthermore, how this role assigned to middle-class professionals—“to be the conscience of the nation...to defend the national future...to speak for [and about] the nation...to alert others of the dangers to democracy...to guide the destiny of the people”—had been hindered by this professional colonialism, which “had been taking place in Colombia for a long time.”<sup>448</sup> Many “naïve...weak and cowardly professionals,” continued Guerrero, could not understand that there was a clear influence between the United States and how professionalization in Colombia was taking place. Imagining a male readership, he asked in his editorial what the relationship was between an engineer, a doctor, an architect, an accountant and North American influence. At first glance, he answered himself, there was no such relationship. But a closer look would reveal how the United States wanted to intervene in the “professional intelligence of the nation.” Furthermore, continued Guerrero, the United States wanted to “influence and control” what professional men did and thought, precisely because of “what the

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

middle class [was] able to do for the nation.” The United States wanted the middle class, Guerrero concluded, to follow “certain models” that could benefit “North America’s interests” at the expense of the interests of the Colombian nation.<sup>449</sup>

These conditions, contended Guerrero and a number of other self-appointed spokesmen for the male middle class, created a professional dependency on the “country of the north,” as it was assumed to be the model for how to play the role of the best leaders of the nation. And precisely because that model was premised upon an “undemocratic need of the United States” to impose its will and advance its interests, Colombian professionals could not depend on this model, since they wanted to “work in a democratic way.”<sup>450</sup> Thus, this movement for “progress, democracy and professional advancement” would fight for the liberation of the middle class from any “colonial bond” with the United States. Indeed, the movement would struggle to be liberated from “U.S. professional colonialism.” In this way, Colombian professionals could exercise their intelligence, technical training and professional values entirely at the service of the Colombian nation.

In later editorials and articles, professional men continued to discuss these and similar problems. In September 1961, for instance, Miguel Giraldo, an architect working for the ICT, presented some remarks about “the conditions of professional colonialism.”<sup>451</sup> Giraldo argued that this type of colonialism was a process through which the United States wanted to make itself into a “democratic leader of other

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<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Miguel Giraldo, “Los profesionales hoy,” *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 7, September 1961, MCLMAR.

nations.” Making some international comparisons, Giraldo structured his argument to demonstrate that “any type of colonialism was out of sync... [and] out of place.”<sup>452</sup> Out of sync because one could see how even “backward places such as black Africa and the Middle East” were being shaken out of the “dark night of colonialism”; thus, it was impossible that Latin America, “a more advanced society,” could still be experiencing “a professional dependency on the United States.” As a result, the United States was acting backwards—that is, out of sync—precisely because it wanted to promote professional colonialism. Similarly, this type of colonialism was out of place, because, argued Giraldo, some gringos believed that Colombia was a country with the “same level of intelligence and professional and cultural stage of those from Africa.” Either out of place or out of sync, this professional colonialism, Giraldo concluded, could lead many to believe that there were neither “middle-class men to do their democratic job” nor an “independent professional intelligence to be recognized and respected.”<sup>453</sup>

And this was precisely what the middle-class liberation movement was campaigning against. As various professional men declared in newsletters and bulletins during the early 1960s,

Our professional sovereignty...the ability to claim primary and supreme authority in the national affairs... [we want] to claim the right to direct the course of the Colombian nation according to our professional values, training, intelligence... hopes, aspirations and ideals. We [want to] possess [that training] without foreign interference or control from extra-national forces; [we] claim our professional and intelligence sovereignty for Colombian professionals, staking a claim to that which is within our domain as professionals. This domain is characterized by our desire to lead the present and the future of this nation by putting to work our scientific, technical and professional training at the service

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 8

of the greater good...[we] claim professional sovereignty, as we are mentally, physically and morally capable of providing a democratic leadership with no foreign intervention.<sup>454</sup>

Thus, professional colonialism would come to an end when professional sovereignty could be “gained in a true and manly fashion.”<sup>455</sup> And this was a central demand among middle-class professionals during the late 1950s and early 1960s, as agronomists, doctors, accountants, sociologists and some economists began holding annual conferences.<sup>456</sup> Although promoted and organized as occupational meetings, these conferences became heated transnational phallocratic conversations through which, I would argue, these professional men fought over the political meanings of being middle class and rehearsed their political campaign for structuring a democratic middle-class society by engaging in what they called the liberation movement of the middle class. During those years, professional men started traveling to various countries in Latin American (Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, Puerto Rico and Mexico) and began, when possible, to create alliances to advance the materialization of their political demands so that the concerns of the Colombian middle class could be heard on an international scale.<sup>457</sup> In 1963, for example, a group of accountants went to Chile to take part in the Inter-American Conference for Accounting

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<sup>454</sup>Gustavo Fernández, “Acaso no somos capaces?” *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 6-7, March 1963, MCLMAR. See also, Antonio Vega “Por nuestro orgullo profesional” *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 8, August 1963, MCLMAR; José Antonio Quiñones, “A qué nos dedicamos?” *Boletín al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 4, February 1964, MCLMAR.

<sup>455</sup> “Por nuestro orgullo profesional” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 8, August 1963, MCLMAR.

<sup>456</sup> Currently, I am preparing an statistical work to show the increase of these professional conferences.

<sup>457</sup> German Giraldo, interviewed with author, Bogotá, Colombia, March 2005, tape recording.



organized by the Organization of American States and the United Nations. Besides presenting formal papers, they used those opportunities to reach “continental colleagues,” as well as to discuss “the future of the middle-class liberation movement.”<sup>458</sup> After this meeting in Chile, Colombian professionals were able to maintain sporadic—yet very productive—correspondence with accountants from Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. In 1964, they were able to organize the Congreso de Contadores Bolivarianos with the support of the National Union of Colombian Accountants and MOCLAM, inviting participants from different countries.

The very first meeting of this congress took place in Quito, Ecuador, and although it was organized as an occupational conference, there was little discussion of formal professional matters. Germán Giraldo recalled how this conference was anything but a professional meeting. At issue was, instead, the situation of the middle class in Latin America. As one of the central figures of MOCLAM and a person actively involved with the middle-class liberation movement, Giraldo played a critical role in the formalization of this short-lived—although very important—continental middle-class organization. Giraldo, along with Clodomiro Rodríguez, was assigned to write the inaugural speech, which was to be recited in front to the Monument of Bolívar in Quito, on July 24, 1964.

Although Clodomiro Rodríguez recited the speech, the presentation was discussed, prepared and written by Giraldo and Rodríguez. While doing so, they engaged in a discussion about what one might now call the content and the narrative of the speech. For Rodríguez, the speech had to be centered on questioning the role

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<sup>458</sup> Clodomiro Rodríguez, interviewed with author, Bogotá, Colombia, March 2005, tape recording.

of the United States in the consolidation of a professional sovereignty. While re-reading his sketchy outlines for the inaugural speech, Clodomiro argued that this intervention was, above all, a struggle against “the giant of the North.”<sup>459</sup> Indeed, for him, to be a professional middle-class man meant to engage in the very defense of professional sovereignty—that is, the struggle to be professionally entitled to command the technical, scientific and professional knowledge of the nation, a task that replicated the major demands of the middle-class liberation movement.

Although he did not have any preliminary notes, Giraldo argued that if a middle-class liberation movement was to have some political resonance, it was necessary to go beyond these complaints. Thus, Giraldo contended in the speech, and still insisted when he discussed its drafting with me, the task was to call upon professionals to draw on what I would call a *homosocial past*—“the past of those who were true men,” through which professional men could learn how to proceed with this middle-class liberation movement.<sup>460</sup> Moreover, this homosocial remembering became the very ground through which political demands could be materialized for the constitution of a middle-class society—namely, the democratic right to enjoy the “democratization of the Colombian society, professional independence and intellectual sovereignty.”<sup>461</sup>

As a result of these male discussions, it seems, the final version of the speech reflected Rodríguez and Giraldo’s political concerns and arguments. To make the

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<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> German Giraldo, interviewed with author, Bogotá, Colombia, March 2005, tape recording.

<sup>461</sup> “La importancia de nuestro país,” unpublished paper, c1965, German Giraldo Personal Archive (hereafter, GGPA).

point as clear as possible to the middle class, they recalled, it was important first to give examples that could tap into the experiences of middle-class professionals.<sup>462</sup> And from there to move into what it was possible to do “for the liberation of the professional middle class away from the Yankee’s control.”<sup>463</sup> In doing so, Clodomiro began the speech by asking some questions about professional experiences. In front of Bolívar’s monument in Quito, he asked a presumably middle-class male audience,

How many of you have seen a national job being stolen from you because a gringo is seen as more qualified to do this job? How many cases have you seen where the gringos get hired by the government to write an opinion about the future of your country? How many of you have seen gringo experts supposedly working for your country? These are two-bit experts [*expertos de pacotilla*] that only want to write reports, with no knowledge of the national reality to benefit their country and so we are in perpetual dependence...where we depend on them on what to say about our countries.<sup>464</sup>

This was the perpetual dependence, along with what they called “exploitation of intelligence and professional monopolization,” that the middle-class liberation movement had to campaign against. If previously, Clodomiro and Rodríguez wrote, the middle class could wait for “the gringos and the oligarchs to recognize” the importance of the professionals for the nation, it was now imperative to take an “active and manly posture to unite the professionals to fight against professional colonialism.”<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> Germán Giraldo, interviewed with author, Bogotá, Colombia, March 2005, tape recording; Clodomiro Rodríguez, interviewed with author, Bogotá, Colombia, March 2005, tape recording.

<sup>463</sup> “Discurso de inauguración del Congreso Bolivariano de contadores,” July 24, 1964, Clodomiro Rodríguez Personal Archive (hereafter, CRPA). See also “apuntes y notas” c1964, CRPA.

<sup>464</sup> “Discurso de inauguración del Congreso Bolivariano de contadores,” July 24, 1964, CRPA.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

And to illuminate that “manly posture,” indeed to become professionally liberated, they argued, Bolívar was close at hand to offer some political guidance. The historical role of Bolívar became a *homosocial* past—that is to say, “the stories of those men and their organizations, their political and social relations, as well as the lives of those men who have united to liberate our countries from the foreign burden”—that offered a political guide to reorganizing the situation of those middle-class professionals.<sup>466</sup> Above all, then, professionals should experience, and embody, those “virile and libertarian standards of Simon Bolívar” in order to create a democratic middle-class society with independent and intelligent professionals leading the Colombian nation.<sup>467</sup> In the same way as Bolívar, these professional men now represented “middle-class liberators” of the vast and progressive expanse of the Americas. And as such progressive, virile and liberating men, they had to incarnate what Bolívar had faced in order to fight against professional colonialism and, at the same time, reclaim professional sovereignty. Professional middle-class men should possess, furthermore, “strength, energy...impartiality, professionalism... [and a] strong drive toward justice and democracy” in order to engage in a liberation crusade. Thus, once these masculine traits from a homosocial past were recuperated, embodied and performed in a manly way, a new political and social order could come into existence. As Clodomiro proclaimed under the (male) gaze of Bolívar’s statute in Quito,

...our professionalism and intelligence must be similar to [Bolívar’s]. He overcame all odds. Just like he did, we want to form a movement of professional independence. Today we represent a new mentality and we represent the six

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

nations he liberated, and we promise to make his vision and projections of unity into reality in order to defend ourselves from the rampant voracity of the pirates of the United States. With our professional intelligence as our only weapon, we are a force to specify the demands of the middle class...because we have the guidance provided by Bolívar...and Bolívar wherever you are, from the heights of your position enlighten us to take the right path to democracy...And Bolívar, wherever you are, from the heights of your position listen to our demands. Oh Bolívar, oh America we demand professional independence, justice and democracy.<sup>468</sup>

As it is suggested in this vehement speech, these professional men attempted to reconstruct a homosocial past of those who were historically engaged in liberation causes as a way to work out a national democratic middle-class campaign. This past, embodied in the male figure of Bolívar, was a political inspiration for the struggles to liberate the middle class from professional colonialism. In so doing, these men were also campaigning to constitute themselves as sovereign professional middle-class men in charge of leading the nation along a democratic path.

### **The Democratic Struggles for Intellectual Labor**

Despite the shared assumptions of some recent scholarship, labor—and more specifically intellectual labor—was hardly incidental or accidental; rather, intellectual labor became paramount in the political discourse configuring the interests, concerns and demands of this middle-class liberation movement and its political campaign to authorize middle-class men as sovereign professionals to lead the nation—and the middle-class society these men were attempting to structure. As

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid. And this was not a unique political argumentation and demand. Some year earlier, in a similar vein, a group of architects, and functionaries of urban planning organized a seminar as a deliberate effort to promote the “use of the intelligence and the capacities of the professional man in benefit of the authentic interest and aspiration of our nation.” After the seminar they wrote a “Letter of the Andes” addressed to the “people of America.” In the missive, they requested that the use of “planning, technical organization” as requirement for “ruling within the high sense of democracy.” Carta de los Andes, documentos varios, October 30, 1959, CINVAR

several letters written by professional men suggest, the participation in the nation of the middle class, composed of professional workers, could no longer be ignored, as it was now to imagine a time to come when this gendered class should embody an “eminent intellectual capacity.”<sup>469</sup>

Through written letters and regular discussions, several professional organizations, along with MOCLAM, demanded that this intellectual capacity should be embodied by professional men who had a “natural democratic right” to occupy their proper and normative middle-class position in the nation and to become a liberated middle class.<sup>470</sup> Clearly drawing upon transnational discourses about the importance assigned to the middle class in democratic societies, discourses which were appropriated and promulgated by the National Front political agendas during the early 1960s, numerous professionals asserted that if Colombia had “not been able to attain democracy,” it was precisely because the labor of professional men—that is, their intellectual labor—had been neither recognized nor valued as “a democratic force in the nation.”<sup>471</sup>

More specifically, these professionals demanded that as men performing intellectual labor, the middle class should occupy neither a “privileged” position, like the oligarchs, nor an “underprivileged” condition, like the laboring classes, but rather a gendered place of “valuable and democratic equilibrium in society.”<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>469</sup>Manifesto, 4, 1963, Box: Sección Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>470</sup>Letter from Hernán Rivera Perez to Alberto Lleras Camargo, May 15, 1960, Despacho Señor Presidente, Box, u/n, folder: organizaciones gremiales, Presidential Archive (hereafter PA)

<sup>471</sup>Ibid. See also, letter from Enrique Diaz to Alberto Lleras Camargo, 8 November, 1961, folder: orden público, 1-6, Box, secretaría general, PA.

<sup>472</sup>Letter from to Jesus Suarez to Secretaria General, February 8 1964, Correspondencia externa, Comité Central Bogotá, Box: Sección Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

Consequently, professionals constantly demanded that this democratic and balanced position could only be gained by elevating the value of the intellectual labor they were producing *for* the nation. As several hosts and guests of the middle-class radio periódico said on the air and as “true and humble” middle-class professional men wrote in letters, discussed in round tables, debated in informal meetings and eventually published in the middle-class manifesto,

The middle class has never been seen as an important part of the nation. It is like we do not exist...and Colombian democracy depends on us, as we can be situated in a place of precious equilibrium. To be middle class is to use our intellectual labor to know how to appease the spirits of others... We are the professionals who think for the nation...we are patriotic thinkers. The time has come to claim our future, using our heads to claim social justice and freedom...to work especially for a democratic society, to work eminently for the middle-class society. This is our democratic struggle.<sup>473</sup>

And it was indeed a political struggle constituted in everyday political practices. In 1961, for instance, Gabriel Castaño, a “frustrated man of the middle class,” wrote a letter to the first president of the National Front, Alberto Lleras Camargo, complaining about the undemocratic situation of the nation.<sup>474</sup> This situation was to be blamed on the government’s and society’s “loss of vision” regarding what middle-class intellectual labor would be able to achieve. According to Castaño, it was impossible to believe how the National Front, and more specifically Lleras Camargo, could still see Colombian society as composed of “a tiny oligarchy and a mass of workers.” It was as if, Castaño argued, “middle-class professional [did] not

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<sup>473</sup>Manifesto, 4, 1963, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>474</sup>Letter from Gabriel Castaño to Alberto Lleras Camargo, April 7 1961, folder: Instituto de Crédito Territorial, 1-4, Box, secretaría general, PA.

plan, think and use [their] intellect for the development of the nation.”<sup>475</sup> Although it is unclear if Lleras Camargo ever responded to his letter (and most likely he did not), some months later Castaño wrote a new missive demanding to be considered “part of a specific nation [*parte de alguna nación*],” given the fact that he, as a professional man, would only “work, serve, live and think” for that nation.<sup>476</sup> Castaño wanted to remind the government and the society that if Colombia wished to reach “the heights of developed countries,” it needed to remember that the middle class was entitled to embody a democratic right to belong to the “thinking nation [*nación pensante*].” According to Castaño, a democratic society should integrate, rather than exclude, four nations—the peasant nation, the working-class nation, the oligarchic nation and thinking nation. More importantly, all the members of the society should be “integrated” into some nation. Indeed, he demanded that, as members of society, all members had a democratic right to belong to a specific nation. Integrating the nations into each other, this democratic right, he demanded, should represent the distribution of the “virtues and qualities of life,” corresponding to “what everybody [was] able to accomplish.” As he wrote in his nineteen-page letter to Lleras Camargo in 1961,

A Nation of peasants able to work the land for the richness of the nation...a nation of workers working for the production of the nation...an elite nation putting capital to the service of the nation...and a nation of democratic professionals thinking for the greater good of the nation.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>475</sup>Ibid.

<sup>476</sup>Letter from Gabriel Castaño to Alberto Lleras Camargo, October 3 1961, folder: administración y finanzas, 1-19, Box, secretaría general, PA.

<sup>477</sup>Ibid.



Although exceptional in its length, Castaño's political arguments and demands were by no means unique. In 1963, Luis Botero, an engineer working for the ICT, submitted a short story to a writing contest organized by the agency's headquarters in Bogotá. The writing contest invited ICT personnel to write stories, tales, poems or essays describing preoccupations and concerns of their life as professionals.<sup>478</sup>

Perhaps following these suggestions, Botero wrote a political short story suggestively titled: "The cobbler should stick to his last [*zapatero a tus zapatos*]"<sup>479</sup>

In it, he depicted the story of three male members of society who met in a social gathering. When introducing themselves, the story went, the three men had the chance to describe what they did for a living. The first member of the society, wrote Botero, was an "important businessman in a company located in Bogotá."<sup>480</sup> His main concern was to make his company "bigger and more productive" so he could offer more opportunities for employment for those who really needed it. The second member of this society, described as an outstanding, talented and intelligent professional, was interested in "think[ing] about strategies, tactics and plans for the betterment of the greater national good." Finally, the third member, Botero wrote,

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<sup>478</sup>These writing contests became common during these years as a way to create a "culture of peaceful labor relationships in the workplace." As part of this project, state as well as private offices began promoting "good human relations" by inviting professionals to express their concerns and interests in the environment of the office. Doing so, it was argued, professional would be able to work more efficiently and more happily.

<sup>479</sup> Presumably, Botero is explicitly making reference to the rather common story of the Roman writer Pliny, who recorded that Apelles, the famous Greek painter, would put his pictures where the public could see them and then stand out of sight so he could listen to their comments. A shoemaker once faulted the painter for a sandal with one loop too few, which Apelles corrected. The shoemaker, emboldened by this acceptance of his views, then criticized the subject's leg. To this Apelles is reported as replying that the shoemaker should not judge beyond his sandals.

<sup>480</sup> Luis Botero, "Zapatero a tus Zapatos," Programas de integración de personal, relaciones humanas, c1963, sección: departamento de personal, serie: gabinete del subgerente general, fondo: subgerencia general Instituto de Crédito Territorial Archive (hereafter, ICTA).

was a “worker of peasant origins who had recently been hired to manufacture glass containers.” Indeed, Botero endeavored to demonstrate how every member, as part of the “society as a whole,” was entitled to perform the “tasks they were supposed to do.”<sup>481</sup>

And yet, this rather repetitive narrative of harmonious conversations among these male members of a society and the different tasks they were entitled to perform was abruptly interrupted by a discussion that, Botero implied, potentially threatened the harmonious “social gathering.” With the outstanding professional as a central character of the conversation, an exchange takes place at the very end of the story through which the implication of the title becomes all too clear: Botero portrayed both the worker and the businessman as “giving too much advice about what [the professional was] able to do.” According to the narrative, this professional was “bombarded with suggestions on how to perform his job, what to do, what to say...and even what to think.” After tolerating so much unsolicited advice, the professional concluded that, with all due respect, they “should each tend to their own business and develop the virtue pertinent to what each and every one [was] able to achieve.”<sup>482</sup>

This short story was a specific political argument, I would contend, through which professionals like Luis Botero repeatedly demanded the right—that is, the privilege—to embody the virtue of intelligence and, more importantly, to be recognized as the thinkers of the nation. Furthermore, these democratic demands

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Letter from Gabriel Castaño to Alberto Lleras Camargo, October 3 1961, folder: administración and finanzas, 1-19, Box, secretaría general, PA.

attempted to hierarchically split places and occupations that assigned roles to middle-class professional men, elites and workers according to what were constructed as the virtues, vocations, qualities and merits of the different members of the nation. In this hierarchical sharing, several middle-class professionals men demanded the right to enjoy a position as the pinnacle of refinement and as thinkers of and for the nation while assigning, even celebrating, on the one hand, the role of the workers as “the sweat of the nation” and the role of the elites as “potential social investors...[and] producers,” on the other.<sup>483</sup> In demanding this democratic right, it was argued, a democratic middle-class society could materialized precisely because this society would be based on homage to hierarchical distributions of labor, dedication, occupations, tasks, assignments and roles specific to “the conditions of each and every member of the society.”<sup>484</sup> Indeed, the campaign for this universal democratic right, and the middle-class society it sought to materialize, was constructed upon a particular exclusionary inclusion of others who would be hierarchically situated, performing tasks, qualities and virtues other than to think, precisely because it should follow the “democratic principle” of permitting, tolerating and, above all, respecting everybody’s democratic right “to do what each [was] capable of doing.”<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> Letter from Gabriel Castaño to Alberto Lleras Camargo, October 3 1961, folder: administración and finanzas, 1-19, Box, secretaría general, PA.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

## The Democratic Struggle for the National Intellectual Capacity

As middle-class professional men demanded the entitlement and recognition of their intellectual labor for the nation as a central part of the middle-class liberation movement, they argued that this was the “democratic pursuit of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” According to MOCLAM, for some participants in the middle-class liberation movement and several other professional organizations during the late 1950s and 1960s, democracy was not yet a reality in Colombia precisely because there existed some obstacles that did not allow those professional to become part of the thinking nation. As I argued previously, among these obstacles was the way that the “government and the oligarchs” constantly privileged, as I argued previously, the “foreign intellectual capacity or brainpower for the leadership of the nation.” Several professionals who were not formally affiliated with the middle-class liberation movement, but who shared similar political demands, wrote lengthy letters and protests to Lleras Camargo requesting that he explained such undemocratic practices.<sup>486</sup> In these missives, self-defined dedicated middle-class male professionals engaged in political argumentation and persuasion to claim, struggle for and demand not only the recognition of their intellectual labor for the nation, but also, and equally important, their *ownership* of what Marco Soto, in his 1960 letter to the president, suggestively called “the *criolla* and autochthonous national intelligence.”<sup>487</sup> Soto, a professional working for a municipal housing office, argued

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<sup>486</sup> Letter from Álvaro Duque to Alberto Lleras Camargo, November 7 1961, folder: Bancos y empleados, 1-5, Box, secretaría general, PA.

<sup>487</sup> Letter from Marco Soto to Alberto Lleras Camargo, May 12 1960, folder: servicios públicos, 1-6, Box, secretaría general, PA.

that if Colombia wanted to be a “democratic...developed and industrialized society,” it should not allow the monopolization of this national intelligence in “U.S. and oligarchic heads.” According to him, and several other professionals, Colombia was not a democracy precisely because “the government and the oligarchs” were hesitant to recognize “the modern and democratic moment that Colombia” was experiencing and, hence, did not want to “popularize”—that is to say, universalize—the national intellectual capacity.<sup>488</sup>

It is not coincidental that during the late 1950s and early 1960s accountants, dentists, social workers and sociologists were actively engaged in struggling for the professionalization of their occupations. Although it is tempting to argue that these movements merely sought the legitimization of their professions, as several scholars have contended, I would argue instead that these processes were a central part of a political campaign to organize themselves as middle-class men.<sup>489</sup> In claiming what they considered a universal democratic right, these professionals simultaneously demanded particular gendered and classed notions of who contributed to the “autochthonous and national intelligence.” Indeed, these demands also sought to *classify* how that intelligence should be practiced as a central part of becoming liberated from “foreign interests.”

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Fernando Uricoechea, *La profesionalización Académica en Colombia. Historia, estructura y procesos* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, IEPRI, 2000); Ricardo Lucio and Mariana Serrano, *La educación superior: tendencias y políticas estatales* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional, IEPRI, 1992); Lucy M Cohen, *Colombianas en la vanguardia* (Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia, CLIO, 2001); Francisco Leal Buitrago (ed.), *Discurso y razón: Una historia de las ciencias sociales en Colombia* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, Fundación Social and Tercer Mundo Editores, 2000).

By defining this national intellectual capacity as the “talent...to know how the nation should be organized for the greater democratic national good,”<sup>490</sup> these professional men continually demanded the right to own this national intellectual capacity, precisely because neither oligarchs nor foreign experts had the ability or talent to understand the problems of the nation.<sup>491</sup> More specifically, professionals, in becoming middle class, would need, first, to pursue the universal democratic task of promoting the “greater national good”—certainly in contrast to the elites, who were only interested in satisfying “their own well-being” at the expense of the national welfare. Second, they would also engage in “knowing the social reality/problems of Colombia”—in contrast to the foreign experts, who, although interested in offering solutions to “problems of poverty,” were quite “detached from Colombian society.”<sup>492</sup> Thus, these professionals, as middle-class men, should have a particular right (i.e., a privilege) to own a national intellectual capacity, because they would put it in practice universally by “leading, organizing and planning” the society only at the service of the “greater democratic/national good.”<sup>493</sup> Indeed, the middle-class professionals would exercise their national intellectual capacity for the democratic/national good precisely because they would hierarchically distribute the virtues, abilities and tasks that “every member of the society” was *specifically*

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<sup>490</sup> Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 1-7 November 1963, Secretaría organizacional, Box: Sección Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid. See also, Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 1-4, March 12, 1964, Secretaría organizacional, Box: Sección Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>492</sup> Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 1-4, March 12, 1964, Secretaría organizacional, Box: Sección Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid.

*capable* of developing, performing and contributing to the nation. This democratic demand, and the middle-class society it sought to materialize, were gendered as well as classed, since it was middle-class men who were entitled to put the national intellectual capacity into practice and decide how to situate and include/exclude those unsuited to the tasks of thinking, planning and organizing the Colombian nation. As several professionals demanded during the late 1950s and 1960s,

...the national intellectual capacity is for those who are able to put it to work in the interest of the nation... intelligence is for those who use it.

Precisely because these demands were at once universal and particular, they became simultaneously practiced and imagined together with political desires, gender identifications and class aspirations. Although one could argue that these ideas were metaphors that merely informed some political demands, my argument is rather that those classed and gendered desires were instrumental in both the very formation of the political campaign of the liberation movement and the democratic middle-class society they were seeking to structure.

Even as these aspiring middle-class professional men demanded a right to own the national intellectual capacity, they lamented “the devastating influence from elites and foreign countries on the *weak* middle class.”<sup>494</sup> Numerous professionals, for instance, wrote detailed papers explaining what they thought it was the undemocratic situation of the middle class.<sup>495</sup> Although never published, these

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<sup>494</sup> Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 1-2, June 6, 1963, Secretaría organizacional, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. My emphasis.

<sup>495</sup> Fernando Lópera, “no dejes para mañana lo que puedes hacer hoy,” c1962, Fernando Lópera Archive. (Hereafter, FLAR). As it was the case with several professionals, Fernando Lópera wrote this paper with the purpose to eventually published it. But that never occurred. He now remembers these papers as forms to “defend the honor of the nation.” Lópera constantly told me that in those papers I would find what really happened and he often insisted that I would not have to talk to him

papers were a political space through which professionals could claim their demands as middle-class men. Fernando López, a doctor in the Instituto de Seguros Sociales who was actively affiliated with the middle-class liberation movement, wrote in 1962 about the importance of defending the national intellectual capacity. López, together with many professionals like him, argued that there was a middle class to which he did not “want to belong.” More importantly, this other middle class, he implied, could not be entitled to own the national intellectual capacity, because they were either actively mimicking “the selfishness of the oligarchs” or passively importing “the foreign brutishness.”<sup>496</sup> Furthermore, he asked, how could this other middle class have the right to exercise the national intellectual capacity—that is, to guide the nation for the greater national good—if they were acting “like women who love[d] to be snobs.”<sup>497</sup> Moreover, continued López, these feminized professionals passively respected “high social positions [and] all that is foreign,” as well as “disowned the authentic nation...the peasants, the working class, the poor.”<sup>498</sup>

This feminization was a problematic aspect of the Colombian middle-class tradition that would prevent some from becoming true middle-class men. In reconstructing a history of this middle-class tradition, López hoped to offer the very political ground upon which his demands as a middle-class man could be legitimized, authorized and secured. According to him, this tradition, or past,

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“because the papers speak for themselves.” Fernando López, interviewed with the author, March 2005.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid.



consisted of two sequential and feminine stages in the “importation of foreign brutishness [*brutalidad extranjera*].”<sup>499</sup> First, argued Lópera, this past covered a historical period from the independence decades of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century through the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this historical period, the oligarchs, “with no real men among their constituencies,” had only been concerned with living “*euuropeamente*...they wanted to think as the French, walk like the English and be like the Italians.” No doubt, he concluded, during this period, the elites, instead of “facing the real and the realities of the Colombian nation,” were desperately and irrationally seeking to be European.<sup>500</sup>

The second stage was categorized as the “Coca-Cola phase” and consisted of the period after Europe was displaced by the United States, when “Panama was shamefully removed from the Colombian nation in 1903.”<sup>501</sup> Since then, mimicking the “cowardly actions of the elites” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the middle class had wanted to “think like gringos, walk like Yankees and drink coca-cola.” For Lópera, this backward tradition was not only an obstacle to “middle-class independence” but also a “potential social danger,” since if this “*yankizada*” and feminized middle class were to own the national intellectual capacity, a democracy could not take place.<sup>502</sup> Lópera cautioned that, unless a middle class composed of manly professional men were to own and defend the national intellectual capacity, “a new epoch of violence, disruption, backwardness [and] discord would be inevitable.” This violence, in

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<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

contrast to the one experienced during the 1950s, could not be explained by “loyalties to traditional parties,” but rather, as the consequence of the “middle-class crime of cowardice.”<sup>503</sup> Thus, insisted Lópera, the national intellectual capacity should be democratically represented by those national professionals who were “manly enough” to face the “the problems and realities of the nation.” As he wrote 1962,

To be middle class...is to collaborate in making the Colombian nation one of the greatest nations of the world...to be middle class is to put the Colombia nation in the ranks of the most industrialized nations...we deserve to think for ourselves... We are the ones who work for the nation. We are the ones who know the nation... we are the ones who can spread justice, equality, order and peace.<sup>504</sup>

Among professionals there were, however, sharp class disputes during the late 1950s and 1960s over the political grounds on which to acquire these democratic rights. In 1963, several professionals working for private insurance companies and state offices drafted and signed a lengthy letter to MOCLAM arguing why “foreign authority,” and more specifically, “United States influence,” had become too pervasive and productive to simply renounce or ignore.<sup>505</sup> Specifically addressing those professionals associated with the middle-class liberation movement (although not mentioning them), and other professionals who shared the movement’s political demands, these self-defined true middle-class men argued that there should not be any contradiction between this inevitable U.S. influence and the development of the national intellectual capacity. In fact, this influence would make this national

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid.

<sup>505</sup> Correspondencia externa, Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 1-11, April 4 1963, Secretaría General, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

intellectual capacity more democratic, these professional men argued, as it would be possible to show the world how middle-class men could guide and take care of the Colombian nation.<sup>506</sup>

And this was indeed the political ground put forth to reclaim the democratic right to enjoy possession of the national intellectual capacity. Sharing the political claim that the oligarchs were not in any “position to represent the nation democratically,” these professionals declared that they as true men could stand up for the nation and make it to the “level of the most industrialized countries of the world.”<sup>507</sup> Seeking the political authorization to practice the democratic task of national representation, as entitled bearers of national intellectual capacity, these professionals argued that there was *another* middle class that could claim this democratic right precisely because its members suffered from a “parochial professionalism.”<sup>508</sup>

In a most telling passage of the letter, these professionals explained to MOCLAM how this parochial professionalism was clearly manifested by certain professionals who were acting with a “feminine vision and outlook.” More importantly, this parochialism was leading some professionals to behave like “traditional women who never get out of house [*mujeres godas que nunca sale de su hogar*].”<sup>509</sup> By juxtaposing the concrete abstractions of home and nation, these self-defined true and sophisticated men argued that such parochial professionals—that is,

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid.

presumably those associated with the middle-class liberation movement—could not be entitled to exercise the national intellectual capacity precisely because they were acting too feminine. They were acting like women not only because they did not want to see beyond the home/nation, but also because they were too “sentimental.” Thus, the parochial professionals lacked the male objectivity needed to exercise the national intellectual capacity to guide the nation democratically.

Unlike the reputedly feminized parochial professionals, however, these true men of the middle class demanded and deserved the right to embody the national intellectual capacity and to put it to work, precisely because they could “compete” and “talk face to face on equal terms” with “other men of the industrialized nations.”<sup>510</sup> Furthermore, these sophisticated and competitive men, with knowledge that extended beyond the borders of the nation/home, could take their place as men in front of those men from powerful countries and defend the Colombian national intellectual capacity.

And yet again, there were other professionals who contested this political association between parochialism and the inability to exercise national intellectual capacity. Although they shared the belief that middle-class professionals were entitled to the leadership of the nation, numerous professionals demanded for themselves this democratic right as a vital part of creating what they also considered a middle-class democratic society. During the first half of the 1960s, several editorials published in the newsletters and bulletins of the middle-class liberation movement claimed that, if these sophisticated middle-class professionals were manly

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<sup>510</sup> Ibid.

enough to stand up before “the men of the world,” they nevertheless lacked a “manly capacity” to face the problems of the nation. Inculcated with the theories produced by the country of the north, they should not be entitled to the democratic right to exercise the national intellectual capacity, since they supported professional colonialism, a major undemocratic as well as unmanly manifestation.<sup>511</sup> Asked one editorial, “How are we going to do the work of democracy if these [sophisticated professionals were] nothing more than backward, incompetent and unproductive empty vessels of the United States?”<sup>512</sup> The editorial continued by claiming these supporters of professional colonialism were just like women precisely because their activities merely mimicked and served big owners; like women, these professionals were enamored of “fancy desks and luxurious offices,” forgetting “the reality of the nation.”<sup>513</sup> It was impossible for a “man in the all breadth of the word” to forget the reality of the nation after working closely with the situation of the poor, the peasants and the working classes. But as these sophisticated middle-class professionals remained in their comfortable, if unmanly, office chairs, their intelligence could not include any “capacity for national understanding.”<sup>514</sup> Characterizing the office as a quintessentially feminized place, the critics claimed these professionals were not

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<sup>511</sup> Rafael Sabogal, “De profesionalismo y otras cosas importantes,” *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 1-2, April 1963, MCLMAR. See also, Alfonso Segura, “Tareas profesionales del hoy y del mañana,” *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 3, March 1964, MCLMAR; Marco García, “Todo pasa y algo queda,” *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 4-5, July 1964, MCLMAR.

<sup>512</sup> Alfonso Segura, “Tareas profesionales del hoy y del mañana,” *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 3, March 1964, MCLMAR.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> Marco García, “Todo pasa y algo queda,” *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 4-5, July 1964, MCLMAR.

manly enough, as they had neither experiential knowledge of the country nor familiarity with “the idiosyncrasies of the Colombian people.”<sup>515</sup> Both undemocratic and unmanly, these professionals were unfit to embody the right to own the national intellectual capacity as a political requirement for leading the nation.

### **“It is Our Wealth.” Intelligence as a National Treasure**

This gendered and classed rivalry continually defined the political campaign to constitute a middle-class society. As previously noted, during the late 1950s and early 1960s professionals began to participate in occupational conferences as part of a political movement of liberating the middle class from “U.S. professional colonialism.” In 1960, for instance, several accountants went to Chile to the Inter-American Conference of Accounting. Juan Emilio Echeverry, a professional who participated in this conference, remembered it as a “life experience.”<sup>516</sup> They went there, he said, to inform the professional of the continent about the middle-class situation in Colombia. Although they stayed only few days in Chile, he continued, they found new opportunities to concretize support for the “middle-class cause” and the fight to become the “bearer of the national intellectual capacity.”<sup>517</sup> Although most of the panels and papers were admittedly about the details of their occupation, Echeverry said, he presented one of the few more political pieces in the

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<sup>515</sup> Ibid.

<sup>516</sup> Juan Emilio Echeverry, interviewed with author, Bogotá, Colombia, March 2005, tape recording.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid.

conference.<sup>518</sup> He presented a paper, he told me in an interview, about the role of accounting as a patriotic and humanistic profession, as well as how its professional knowledge could be placed at the service of the nation.<sup>519</sup> Originally he had hoped to publish it in a journal, but he never pursued that goal. Now, as we read it together, he reminded me that its importance was, above all, political, as it was written at a moment in which their “professional dignity...middle-class pride... and national role were at stake.”<sup>520</sup> Furthermore, when I insisted on getting into the details of the paper, he felt compelled to explain a point that, although indisputable, was crucial not to miss. He said,

This was a struggle between men...true men. We wanted to be respected as middle class and as a nation. We have the professional knowledge and experience to take care of our house...we had our sentiment of nationality...we wanted to put our intelligence at the service the nation. This was a struggle between men...national men and foreign men for the pride and knowledge of the nation. And with this intelligence we want to purify, dignify and exalt the professional dignity.<sup>521</sup>

In this unpublished paper, Echeverry wrote to the “the professionals of the continent” so they could become aware of the situation of the middle-class liberation movement in Colombia. He structured his paper by making constant comparisons between past historical foreign interferences in Colombia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and what he considered more recent and dangerous U.S. interventions. As was becoming

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<sup>518</sup> In the conference program Echeverry appeared as presenting a piece under the title “La contaduría como profesión en Colombia,” c 1960, Juan Echeverry Archive (hereafter JEAR).

<sup>519</sup> Juan Emilio Echeverry, interview with author, 2005. Juan Emilio Echeverry, “La contaduría como profesión en Colombia,” JEAR.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

commonplace, Echeverry narrated the past as the very political ground through which he could claim his male middle-classness. In the 1930s, Echeverry wrote in his paper, Colombia—defined as “the nation, the society and the government”—had faced a serious and complicated international conflict in which the society as whole defended “the land [that] belonged to the Nation.”<sup>522</sup> In 1932, Echeverry recounted, over 300 armed Peruvian civilians seized the Amazonian harbor town of Leticia in a demonstration against the Salomón-Lozano Treaty of 1922. This border settlement treaty had conceded the territory to Colombia. In a quick response, Echeverry narrated, “the men of the fatherland” sent 1,500 soldiers to “repel the aggressors.” If, he asked at the conclusion of his paper, during the Peruvian-Colombian conflict of the 1930s there had been a national consensus to defend “a piece of land that everyone knew belonged to the nation and was being viciously stolen,” why did nobody seem to care for the national intellectual capacity now? According to Echeverry, the most dangerous U.S. intervention was neither military nor economic; rather, it was the “exploitation, manipulation, mistreatment and monopolization of the most important *national treasure* [tesoro, fortuna]...and *natural resource* [recurso natural]: the national intellectual capacity.”<sup>523</sup> And precisely because nobody—neither the elites nor feminized middle-class professionals nor the laboring classes—could defend the natural resources of the nation, the masculinised middle-class professionals were entitled to exercise “the democratic obligation” to protect

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<sup>522</sup> Juan Emilio Echeverry, “La contaduría como profesión en Colombia,” c 1960, JEAR.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid., my emphasis.



professional intelligence, as a “natural part of the nation,” from “U.S. invasion, occupation and influence.”<sup>524</sup>

This political demand was echoed during the middle-class liberation movement’s round tables and publications, as well as MOCLAM political meetings. At the same time, with the formalization of the National Front, dentists, accountants, sociologists and social workers lobbied in Congress requesting for the recognition of these professions. As argued previously, also at issue was their demand to be enabled to “fulfill their duties as Colombians and defend the national resources of the nation.” “Stop allowing the exploitation of national treasures,” a telegram declared in 1963; “our intelligence is only ours...listen carefully only to ours,” wrote two “misunderstood middle-class professionals.”

And perhaps because of these misunderstandings, MOCLAM frequently invited professionals to its radio periódico to voice their concerns and discuss those “undemocratic problems in Colombia.”<sup>525</sup> In 1964, for instance, an incomplete transcript shows Gustavo Ramírez, a professional account participating in the MOCLAM radio program, interviewing a guest; his questions indicate that the main political preoccupation was to invite the audience to be aware of the “the resources of the nation.” Besides the formal questions of occupation and profession, Ramírez asked the guest what were the main problems of the nation with regard to the lack of democracy. And, perhaps as result of the answer he received, Ramírez felt compelled to wonder about what was the “most important natural resource available in

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<sup>524</sup>Ibid.

<sup>525</sup> Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria de cultura, Comité Central, Bogotá, 2-8, February 1964, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

Colombia.” After asking these questions, and probably after extensive answers by the guest (for there were no additional questions listed), Ramírez made what it seems to be a mandatory invitation to his middle-class listeners:

The time has come to be democratic...and face the situation of the nation...It is time for you to be a man and wear the pants of the nation ...until now we have had our pants down, and it is time to pull them up... the most important source of national wealth is not the land nor the great industries, the most important source of natural wealth for a nation is the intelligence of their men...pull up your pants and defend the natural resources of the nation.<sup>526</sup>

Perhaps as a response to this incontrovertible invitation to engage in political and masculine endeavors, several professionals wrote long letters denouncing the exploitation of the national intellectual capacity and demanding that this treasure be reclaimed as a constitutive part in structuring a gendered middle-class society. Furthermore, echoing what they had heard on the middle-class radio periódico, various professionals contended that it was “a social injustice” to allow “foreign hands and heads” to exploit the intelligence of the nation.<sup>527</sup> In 1965, Jaime Domínguez, a self-described concerned middle-class father, forwarded a letter to MOCLAM he had previously written to President Lleras Camargo. In this missive, Domínguez complained about how unjust this was, since intelligence, cultivated on an everyday basis, could be easily “taken away.” To make his point, Domínguez

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<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> Letter from Jaime Domínguez to Secretaria General, September 14 1965, Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central Bogotá, Box: Secciónal Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR. See also letter from Jaime Domínguez to Alberto Lleras Camargo, October 1960, folder: ministerio de educación, 1-3, Box, secretaria general, PA. The letters are slightly different as the one sent to MOCLAM in 1965 began by saying “...it has already become an unbearable a problem of ours. We have talked about it all the time and we are not heard.” Also, in both letters Domínguez’s son is described as about eight years old, even through the letter to MOCLAM is about five years older.

described his routine as a middle-class father, engaged in preparing his eight-year-old son for “the challenges offered by the nation.” Reading stories every day, teaching what was important in life, preparing “the environment” to go to school, Domínguez argued, he wanted “to endow his brain” so that his son could become “a true man of society at the service of society.”<sup>528</sup> In doing so, continued Domínguez, he was passing on to his son the “most important and inalienable heritage: intelligence and education.” And this was precisely the reason why Domínguez found it so unjust that this heritage—as a natural virtue to be embodied through a process of everyday cultivation and education—could be undervalued by “preferring foreign influence” over the one “that [was] truly at the service of the nation.” Still, Domínguez hoped, as he described telling his son, this heritage could not be easily taken away since, in the process, it had become “an inalienable part of the [national] mind.”<sup>529</sup>

Other listeners and writers went even further, perhaps responding to the inescapable invitation from the MOCLAM radio periódico announcer. If the national intellectual capacity needed to become an inalienable democratic right owned by middle-class men, that intelligence had to be nationally masculinized. That is, those professionals demanded that the national intelligence be practiced and embodied by “true...middle class...intelligent men.”<sup>530</sup> Furthermore, by assuming a “feminine

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<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid.

<sup>530</sup> Letter from Dario Muñoz to Secretaría General, September 14 1965, Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central Bogotá, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR; see also letter from Ignacio Suárez to Secretaría General, October 12, 1963, Boletines y programas de radio, comisiones de trabajo exterior, Comité Central Bogotá, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

role/responsibility,” this elitist middle class had allowed the national intelligence to be “exploited...penetrated and violated” by U.S. influence. Understood in sexual terms, and in contrast to this feminized middle class, the middle-class professionals would, performing as men, actively protect the intelligence from any “foreign penetration,” as well as defend its brainpower, like a natural resource, from any “overseas abuse.” They could become middle-class men by putting to work their “virile” professionalism to stand up like men for the democratic right/privilege/obligation to not only guide the nation but also, and just as importantly, defend its most “important...productive and lucrative natural resource.” Now, more than ever, these middle-class professionals would have the “*pantalones bien puestos*” so their masculinity would not be at stake as they were guarding their “national intellectual capacity from any violation.”<sup>531</sup>

In conclusion, these middle-class professionals challenged what they considered an undemocratic society. Working, imagining and practicing their political demands intelligibly within a transnational discourse framework which closely associated the middle class with the possibility of achieving a democratic and peaceful society, these professionals demanded democratic rights to possess a national intellectual capacity as a central part of the creation of a democratic middle-class society. In doing so, these professionals wanted to become not the center of the nation—that is, in the middle of oligarchs and laboring classes—as those transnational discourses proclaimed, but rather, “democratic heads of the nation.” In the process, they

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid. See also, Letter from Javier Vega to Secretaría General, September, 1964, Boletines y programas de radio, Comisiones de trabajo exterior, Secretaria general, Comité Central Bogotá, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca,

challenged what would soon come to be known as “United States professional colonialism” in order to struggle for the constitution of a new democratic society. This society would replace the “old society of classes” that was characterized, on the one hand, by “petty oligarchs” who led the nation only in the service of their “own tiny interests,” and on the other hand, by a colonial mentality privileging “foreign professional preparation...and profits” when guiding “the paths of the nation.” Professionals politically campaigned to create this new democratic society by reclaiming intelligence and thus their democratic right to *head* the nation democratically because, contrary to an “old and undemocratic” oligarchic democracy, they could do so by universalizing the interests of “the society as a whole” and for the benefit of “the greater national good.”

At the very same time, this constitution of a democratic society was constructed upon the appropriation of what came to be known as the national intellectual capacity as a particular democratic right to be exercised neither by feminized elites nor by poorly prepared laboring classes, but rather by *manly middle class bodies*. Furthermore, these professionals demanded that their intellectual labor—central to the creation of a democratic society—be politically and socially recognized as a masculine endeavor to be performed by *manly middle-class men*. Finally, they challenged U.S. “professional colonialism” by claiming ownership of the national intellectual capacity—politically imagined as a natural resource or treasure—to be owned, protected and defended by middle-class men in the interest of the society as a whole. This political campaign, at once universal and particular, became crucial in the constitution of a middle-class democratic society that would allow these middle-

class men to inhabit a hierarchical position above middle-class women, the elites and the laboring classes.

### **An Association in Accordance with Our Class**

Along with MOCLAM and the middle-class liberation movement, professional men intensified the formalization of professional associations as part of this very much-contested middle-class political campaign. Although during the late 1950s this formalization was characterized by isolated associations discussing occupational matters, by 1963, when Guillermo León Valencia took office as the second president under the National Front, various occupational groups—veterinarians, animal scientists, agronomists, general doctors and eye doctors, architects, nurses, dentist, social workers, chemists, ear-nose-and-throat specialists, most of them professionals working for social state institutions such as ICSS and ICT—founded the Federación Colombiana de Profesionales Universitarios (FEDEPROCOL). Although it was not officially inaugurated until 1965, this organization had been active in struggling for a democratic middle-class society since the early 1960s.

During the first years of this organization, and through constant critical dialogue with MOCLAM and the middle-class liberation movement, professionals engaged themselves in rather heated debates about the type of organization they wanted to form. Usually concerned with legitimizing the class taxonomy, the very first years of this professional organization were characterized by heated male disputes about the goals, interests, purposes and objectives that middle-class men should politically

endorse.<sup>532</sup> Above all, some argued, the organization should represent the “democratic role of the middle class as professional association.” In stark contrast to labor unions, the association would work, more specifically, for the “democratic representation of the Colombian professional body.”<sup>533</sup> Such an organization would only struggle for wider democratic change, and in contrast to worker and peasant classes organizations’ recourse to brute force, it would have at its disposal the most important democratic weapon of all: professional intelligence. Not surprisingly, intelligence—after being valorized as a form of labor, a natural resource and a political virtue—now had to be used as a political weapon to defend the professional body. Should the need for a professional strike arise, these organizations would not support the use of “any brute force,” like working-class labor unions, but would rather take to the streets using the “power of persuasion, merit of dialogue, moral nobility, intellectual tenacity and argumentative talent” to gain their rights through democratic means.<sup>534</sup>

Furthermore, other professionals argued that this organization was not only important as a representation of the professional body, but should also be a manifestation of what they called modern professional unionism. Specifically, as a

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<sup>532</sup> Again, accompanying the formalization of this professional organization, there were other groups that spoke specifically for “middle-class professional women.” As I mentioned earlier, I am tracing the story of these professional organizations founded during the second half of the 1960s.

<sup>533</sup> Minutes of Primer Congreso Nacional de Federación Colombiana de Profesionales Universitarios, March 4, 1965, 1-5, folder: congresos, Box: presidencia, FEDEPROCOLAR. Some of the professional organizations involved in this association were the National Association of Nurses (ANEC); the National Association of Dentists (ASDOAS); the Association of Professional Therapists (ASTECO); and the Association of Bacteriologists (ASBAS), among many others. In the late 1960s two professional organizations were founded as representing “middle-class professional women.” Hopefully, I will be able to see their archive to complicate my argument about the political formation of the middle class as a project of gender and class politics.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid.

central part of a political campaign structuring a middle-class society, this modern professional unionism would advance a national democracy that—in contrast to both traditional labor unionism that advanced only workers’ particular interests and associations of big capital concerned only with the profits of elites—would demand broader social changes that would affect “the society as whole...and positively influence the nation.”<sup>535</sup>

And yet, it is here where a contradiction forcefully emerges (once again) in the attempt to structure a middle-class society. To the extent that this organization was constructed as a democratic representation of a specific “professional body,” it thus paradoxically furthered the same sorts of narrow, self-interested politics that it sought to counteract. In fact, at the very center of this political movement was a paradox through which political demands for the benefit of the society at large were to be achieved by consolidating the political interests of the professionals as a class—that is to say, to constitute a middle-class society. Furthermore, the representation of elite associations and labor unionism were part of a hierarchical “inclusionary exclusion” that enabled the very condition of modern professional unionism, and the middle-class society it stipulated. It allowed this putative middle-class organization to position itself simultaneously both as a universal democratic force and a *class* representation of “the professional body...those with similar aspirations, hopes and made up of colleagues of interest.”<sup>536</sup> These professionals men argued for an organization that could demand democratic changes that would affect

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<sup>535</sup> Minutes of primer congreso nacional de Federación Colombiana de Profesionales Universitarios, March 4, 1965, 1-5, folder: congresos, Box: presidencia, FEDEPROCOLAR.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid.



“the society as whole...and positively influence the nation”; thus they could structure a middle-class society, through which those professionals could not only be distinct in relation to other social groups—as most of the recent studies on the middle class would have it—but also, and more importantly, to be oppositionally located *above* both the laboring and the oligarch classes.

A central part of this political campaign for the hierarchical constitution of a middle-class society, I would argue, was to increase—rather than reduce, as we usually assume—material inequalities among “all the members of the society.”<sup>537</sup> These political demands attempted to establish an unequal distribution of material compensation in society—or, at the very least, sought to consolidate a process of economic divergence as a constitutive aspect of creating a middle-class society. Although the taxonomy of this professional organization was constructed upon the hierarchical difference from those associated with capital and labor and their putatively particular demands, professionals actively and persistently threatened to go on strike to fight for “middle-class salaries.” In fact, the practical political claim to own and exercise the democratic right to national and professional intelligence became a powerful source of legitimacy to demand a “democratic distribution of material rewards.”<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> In this argument I am drawing conceptually upon Barbara Weinstein, “Developing Inequality,” *American Historical Review*, 113;1 (February 2008); Also, Manu Goswami, *Producing India. From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Weinstein has provocatively argued “...we thus run the risk of having a great deal to say about the genealogy of race, class and gender discourses that undergird hegemonic power, but having very little to say about the material disparities that are probably the most distressing consequences of the hierarchies they produce.” Ibid., 9; And Goswami contends that a focus of the historical geography “does not require us to reify the economy, to treat it as an ontological given, a self-regulating, autonomous sphere, or as determinative in some dreaded last instance.” Ibid., 29.

<sup>538</sup> Minutes of Junta Directiva Nacional, September 12, 1965, 1-13, folder: unknown, Box: presidencia, FEDEPROCULAR.

To be sure, no professional strike actually occurred during the 1960s.<sup>539</sup> But I want to caution that this does not mean that these professionals became apolitical. Quite to the contrary: it is still crucial to see how they engaged in rather heated debates—taking place in meetings, gatherings and conferences—to discuss that eternal possibility of going on strike. For instance, these professionals demanded that a new democratic distribution of material rewards replace the current “undemocratic, elitist, oligarchical” system. Indeed, the current elitist system, they protested, was premised upon “birth rights” through which some groups of the society would get “more benefits because they [were] born rich” and other sectors would be excluded or “to get less because they [were] born poor.” In contrast, they insisted that a new democratic distribution should be put in place that would include “every member of society” in the sharing of the nation’s material rewards. This distribution, in contrast to an elitist one that only produced “discord, confrontations and dissatisfaction,” would be democratically based upon “the natural merits of your job... [as well as the] natural merits of what you achieve *for* the nation.”<sup>540</sup>

In February 1967, Oscar Duque, representing the professional body, participated in a tripartite conference organized by the administration of President Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966-1970). Speaking before participants who presumably represented labor and capital, Duque elaborated on those job merits that, although natural, were

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<sup>539</sup> During the 1970s these professionals, and particularly doctors, went indeed on strike. It is a process I would like to analyze for a future project.

<sup>540</sup> Ibid.

in desperate need of being “recognized, valued...and much better compensated.”<sup>541</sup>

There was, Duque began his speech, a “derogatory understanding of those who do intellectual tasks.” It was a social stereotype that portrayed these professionals as “Cinderellas of society.” They were seen this way precisely because they would do “all the important work for the nation, for other groups in society,” yet would receive a “poor compensation.”<sup>542</sup> Furthermore, these “dedicated professionals” were regarded by society and the government as if they were “on a mission [*apostolado*]” and thus in no need of being “democratically compensated.” And this, Duque declared, was the undemocratic error—that is, the embedded belief that because these professionals served the nation could live by “taking a vow of poverty.”<sup>543</sup>

Next, presumably addressing representatives of capital in the tripartite conference, he endeavored to show how professionals were the most important “multipliers of wealth in the nation.” On the one hand, these professionals were in charged of preparing, educating and guiding “the human element and economic potential of those of the lower spheres.” On the other, they combated “human inefficiency,” continued Duque, by inviting “the members of the upper spheres of society to invest in the development of the nation.” Even with such a crucial role,

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<sup>541</sup> Minutes of conferencia tripartita del gobierno nacional, notas de intervención de Oscar Duque en representación de la Federación Colombiana de Profesionales Universitarios, February, 1967, 1-15, folder: conferencias, Box: vicepresidencia general, FEDEPROCOLAR. See also, Ministerio de Trabajo de Colombia, *La Reforma Laboral Colombiana* (Bogotá: Ministerio, 1967); Ministerio de Trabajo, *Conferencia tripartita* (Bogotá: Ministerio, 1967).

<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

concluded Duque, these professionals were destined to be denied “what they democratically deserved.”<sup>544</sup>

Now, these professionals were demanding a democratic distribution through which “all members of society” would receive what they were democratically entitled to. This democratic distribution, furthermore, should be based not upon “birthrights,” but rather upon “the natural merit of the job...what you do in life.” In demanding this, these professional men argued they were entitled to “receive middle-class salaries”—that is, more compensation than the laboring classes would democratically deserve—because they were performing “transcendental tasks for the progress [and] development of the nation...and the survival of democracy.”<sup>545</sup> Those who performed manual labor, meanwhile, could make no such claim and were denounced for their exclusive pursuit of “their own undemocratic and inflexible demands.” Indeed, several professionals contended that this democratic distribution, as a central element in structuring a middle-class society, would necessarily replace “violence, backwardness of social relations...and confrontational politics” with “social harmony and political stability,” because now “every member of the society” could gain material rewards according to what they were able and assigned to do for the nation. This democratic distribution would establish social harmony and political stability by hierarchically giving everybody what they democratically deserved, according to “the effort invested for the progress of the nation.”<sup>546</sup> As professionals

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<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid. See also letter from Oscar Duque Pérez to Juan Arciniegas Castilla , March, 12, 1966, folder: correspondencia interna, Box: presidencia general, FEDEPROCOLAR.

argued in letters, political meetings, conferences and discussions during the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s,

How do I explain to my family that there is the need to cultivate the brain to be somebody in the nation...that there is merit in achieving professional jobs that help the nation move forward when there are daily examples that speak loudly to the contrary?...This is socially backward.<sup>547</sup>

By no means do I want to discredit what a peasant or a worker does for their own living, because they also drive the nation forward...We need a functional democracy through which every productive effort is shared and every compensation corresponds to each and every one according to the efficiency of its application for the nation...but I sometimes feel we are living in a world that is upside-down, as our dynamic and creative function for the nation is undervalued. Is it then advisable to invest in my sons' schooling, or do I need just to find them a job in a factory?<sup>548</sup>

Is it too much to ask for middle-class salaries...Is it too much to ask to get paid what we deserve....the intangible skill of our job deserves better recognition and higher monetary compensation... With all due respect for the hard work of the workers and peasants, how can a professional who drives the nation forward make less than a peasant and a worker... this is really an injustice.<sup>549</sup>

These demands were not only a call to fix certain class distinction and distance from the laboring classes, as is now commonly argued, but also, and I would argue quite crucially, a political demand to constitute a middle-class society through which material rewards were unequally and specifically distributed according to a democratic premise that those who “accomplish more for the nation” were entitled to

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<sup>547</sup> Letter from Jorge Cristo to Alberto Lleras Camargo, December, 12 1961, folder: ministerio de educación, 1-2, Box, secretaría general, PA.

<sup>548</sup> Letter from Miguel Velásquez to Alberto Lleras Camargo, June 15, 1961, folder: ministerio de educación, 1-2, Box, secretaría general, PA.

<sup>549</sup> Letter from Carlos Macias to Secretaria General, February 15 1963, Correspondencia externa, Comité Central Bogotá, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

“receive more.”<sup>550</sup> These professionals constructed themselves as manifesting a democratic merit due to the very nature of their jobs as explicators of the nation and assigners of specific social tasks that enabled progress and development to take place. They thus felt entitled to claim a material disparity to their own advantage. Although perpetually in formation, this political campaign sought to constitute a democratic society by, on the one hand, questioning an elitist/undemocratic distribution based upon “birthrights,” and on the other, and at the same time, creating, or, at the very least exacerbating, unequal material distribution as part of the very political practice of becoming part of a middle class.

### **A Democracy of the Several**

During these years, these democratic demands for professional sovereignty, and for ownership of national intellect became crucial to one of the major political claims professionals put forward to structure a democratic middle-class society—and redefined the nature of governance in that society. Recent historical and anthropological analyses of the middle class, following the influential studies of Pierre Bourdieu, have quite convincingly argued that members sought to erect cultural and social distinctions in relation to elites and laboring classes. But I contend that this political campaign was also, and perhaps more importantly, a gendered and classed movement struggling over *who*, on the one hand, was entitled to the

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<sup>550</sup> Minutes of conferencia tripartita del gobierno nacional, notas de intervención de Oscar Duque en representación de la Federación Colombiana de Profesionales Universitarios, February, 1967, 1-15, folder: conferencias, Box: vicepresidencia general, FEDEPROCOLAR.

democratic right to rule, and on the other, *how* that rule could be carried out in “truly democratic societies.”<sup>551</sup>

This was indeed one of the major political demands that professionals put forward in their efforts to undo the frustrations, deceptions and paradoxes produced when attempting to educate both the oligarchies and the laboring classes during the first administration of the National Front. By 1964 many professionals intensified their participation in round tables, cafes discussion, and house gatherings—especially those formally associated with the middle class liberation movement, through MOCLAM and its radio *periódico*, and FEDEPROCOL. They wrote prolifically questioning what they continually referred to as an elitist society and undemocratic situation. In 1963, for instance, Alberto Valencia, an architect trained by CINVA during the second half of the 1950s and working for ICT during the 1960s as well as an active member of the middle-class liberation movement, felt sufficiently compelled to write a political poem to be read at a round table and, hopefully, published in the movement’s newsletter. Although this piece never appeared in print, its political argumentation and demands did resonate with those professionals who were engaged in seeking the constitution of a middle-class

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<sup>551</sup> By no means I want to dispute that the historical process of creating class distinctions played a pivotal role in the formation of the middle class. In fact, the construction of these distinctions—in life-style, practical aesthetics, consumption and judgment of taste—were indeed crucial for a constitution of middle class identifications. My argument is rather that those distinctions were also part of a collective political class campaign to struggle for a democratic right to govern, indeed to rule, the very Others these middle class professional were attempting to be distinguished from. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984); Brian Owensby, *Intimate Ironies. Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class in Brazil*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); David Parker, *The Idea of the Middle Class. White-Collar Workers and Peruvian Society, 1900-1950*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); Maureen O'Dougherty, *Consumption Intensified: The Politics of Middle Class Life in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

democracy. Specifically questioning the National Front and its “elitist politics,” along with a critical stand about the “undemocratic situation of the nation,” Alberto demanded, instead, “a true democracy.”<sup>552</sup> For many historians, this poem could be seen as the anecdotal jewel of the irrepressible middle-class political resistance and agency in the context of the early National Front administrations. Instead, I would argue that Alberto Valencia, like many other kindred professionals, was positioned to act as a class buffer, as a sympathizer of the laboring classes and as counselor of the elites in order for progress, and above all, democracy to be achieved. As I argued in previous chapters, this hierarchical class positioning, articulated through social and political policies of the two first administrations of the National Front, was highly contradictory and thus generated space for questioning and transformation. Claiming his class and gender position as a middle-class man working for democracy and peace, he now used his preparation and political meanings to write a poem challenging and questioning the “professional colonialism” he understood the United States to be practicing. In so doing, he was writing against the politics of the National Front that put democracy at risk by including only “those in the higher sphere of the society.” Instead, he campaigned for recognition of the middle-class men as a democratic force to rule the nation. In a recent interview, Valencia remembered that as a “dedicated professional working for democracy,” he wrote this as a way to protest “politely but loudly about the undemocratic situation of the country.” Politely, because he had to use “his intellectual power and professional weapons” to make “the elites come to their senses.” Loudly, because, after working

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<sup>552</sup> Alberto Valencia, “poem,” c1963, Alberto Valencia Personal Archive (Hereafter, AVPA)



along with “the poor, the peasants, the working class,” it was not possible for “society to still be indifferent to the undemocratic doings of the oligarchs.”<sup>553</sup>

In this poem, Valencia is demanding that they, as middle-class intelligent professional, should be entitled to be the head of the nation—and own the right (i.e. privilege) to rule it. He, like many professionals men like him, I would argue, were struggling to be positioned not in the middle of the oligarchs and laboring classes but, above all, as the leaders of both. Valencia was envisioning the consolidation of a society through which a democratic right to govern could be gained by—and granted to—those who were democratically entitled: “[professionals with] eminent intellectual capacity, merit and talent.” As Alberto Valencia wrote in 1963,

Abrigo mis creencias,  
no se si con razón de fundamento,  
que quienes pueden lidiar con una nación tienen que ser de esos hombre buenos  
para la inteligencia

Quiera la nación que mis humildes demandas solo sean un chascarrillo del  
momento;  
Una demostración del profesional descontento,  
que merezca rapida atención de los obsesionados del poder  
de esos pequeños oligarcas que no quieren escuchar.

Porque de estos pequeños oligarcas,  
poco dan espera pues solo quiere para ellos los beneficios de las fuentes  
naturales  
y no se diga de las riquezas nacionales

La lucha feaciente [sic] de la clase media, aqui y ahora,  
con animos democráticos ya que si ahora perdemos la partida para siempre sera  
y  
sin esperanza.

Que importa que tengamos descendientes, pequeños oligarcas herejos de  
bandoleros  
unos con el puñal entre los dientes y otros llenos de rabia ardiente  
Quien corpontadonse han perdido el cordon de caballeros

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<sup>553</sup> Alberto Valencia, interview with the author, March 2005, tape recording.

porque nos han enseñado con su ejemplo una casa como un templo  
que no deben respetar los forasteros

Pequeños oligarcas que embriagados de ignorancia en sus sentidos,  
les decimos que hay técnica y profesionalismo entre los colombianos  
Pequeños oligarcas embriagados de sordura y ceguera,  
les decimos que los gringos nos tienen sometidos

Nuestros huéspedes quedan advertidos y para siempre,  
aunque parezca duro pues de los pequeños oligarcas hay duda de que limpien el  
camino.

Pues lo ha intentado metiéndose solo con ellos mismos  
Si van a entorpecer nuestro futuro pues Colombia es un país de profesionales  
Y si de sabios profesionales lo es también de guerreros varoniles  
Porque no solo es de millonarios oligarcas ni de pobres pordioseros, pues,  
pongan  
atención, no seremos admiradores clasistas de beneficios elitistas.

No son común el oro y los honores, dicen unos.  
Pero vuelan aquí la eminente capacidad intelectual, el mérito y los talentos  
Es una clase media en pro de tareas nacionales  
Si hay bandido como los pequeños oligarcas, también hay honorables  
profesionales  
Y si así hemos de seguir, de todos modos, pequeños oligarcas, humildes  
laboradores,  
los rojos rojos y los godos godos  
Y seguiremos que la mezcla de inteligencia, mérito y talento  
que nos deje tranquilo el vecino en nuestros tambos y nuestro intereses, con  
nuestras  
leyes, libres y enfrentados al destino.  
Pero que sepan que no son los de la poderosa clase media los traidores a quienes  
nada importa la insensatez nacional del colegio profesional.

Es un insulto a aquellos altaneros que nos dieron un pueblo soberano el alzar el  
puñal contra el hermano nacional  
Que aprendan ya los pequeños oligarcas que de dirigentes ya no tienen nada  
Y para la democracia no tienen la inteligencia, poco menos el profesionalismo y  
los talentos  
Es declarar ante los extranjeros que de Llorente ya no habrá flores y que puede  
volver nuestras luchas ser contra pueblos tiranos.<sup>554</sup>

Drawing on notions of proper politics, as is eloquently suggested by Valencia's  
poem, these professional men engaged in debates questioning the "democratic

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<sup>554</sup> Alberto Valencia, "poema," c1963, AVPA.

capacity” of the oligarchies to lead the nation. In contrast to what these oligarchies were supposed to be doing during the National Front, they were leading the country (again) into—even after the guidance offered by professional middle-class—an “elitist society...violent and undemocratic practices.”<sup>555</sup> These professionals wrote extensive treatises about how these oligarchies were no longer entitled, if they ever were, to continue “commanding the nation” as they had become unfit for such a “democratic task.”<sup>556</sup> Always proclaiming themselves as those who were able to transcend the liberal/conservative sectarianism as Valencia suggested in his poem, these professionals insisted that they, above all, needed to become the head of the nation if a democracy and social peace were ever to be achieved in Colombia. In 1964, for instance, a doctor working for the ICS, wrote an editorial in the newsletter of the middle-class liberation movement contending that the “democratic direction of the nation had gone offtrack.”<sup>557</sup> Offtrack, indeed inappropriately allocated, Juan Vargas wrote, because its direction was not only in the “hands of the few” but also at the service of the few. Constantly referring to the National Front and its “lack of common sense,” Vargas categorized this misdirection as the result of a “democracy of the few” through which these oligarchs were concerned only with themselves, ignoring the productive efforts that the rest of the society put forward so that

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<sup>555</sup> Rubén Macías, “De calidades profesionales,” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 2-3 May 1963, MCLMAR; Minutes of Comité Ejecutivo Central, Bogotá, 9, September 1959, Box: Seccional Cundinamarca, MOCLAMAR.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Juan Vargas, “Un llamamiento a la cordura” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 1-2, October 1964, MCLMAR.

“development and progress could take place.”<sup>558</sup> With the sole purpose of satisfying their thirst of power, Vargas argued, this democracy of the few had only produced difficult hardships that had forced the laboring classes to search for the consolidation of a “democracy of the many.” This democracy was only at the service of the many, which simultaneously would produce “disharmony and regressive political instability.”<sup>559</sup>

If, on the one hand, continued Vargas, middle class professionals were to take the path of the democracy of the few, they would have no choice but join “the backward and traditional parties.” In they did so, these middle-class professionals were likely to be stuck in an office, and, above all, to become feminized and “dependent on the oligarchs.” If, on the other hand, the middle class were to take the path of the democracy of the many, it would be condemned to “social and political anonymity.” In stark contrast, Juan Vargas envisioned, and even demanded, the building of “a democracy of the several” through which the direction of the nation would be neither in the “hands of the few” (which would only serve those few) nor in the “hands of the many” (because it would only be at the service of those many). Rather, for Vargas a truly democratic society, would be in the “heads of the several,” precisely because this democratic direction would be at the service of both the few and the many.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid.

Some active professional of the middle-class liberation movement went even further by writing extensive treatises to Presidents Alberto Lleras Camargo and Guillermo León Valencia concerning the middle-class' role as best governors in a democracy. Although it is unclear if these specific letters were discussed in round tables (as they were never published in the middle class liberation movement's bulletins or newsletters), these professional men were demanding, once again, "a democratic revolution." They clearly felt compelled to write letters making historical connections and political arguments in favor of this democratic revolution, insisting that, unless the nation wanted to continue living in "injustice, backwardness and antidemocracy," the oligarchs did not "deserve" to be in the position of "ruling classes" any longer.<sup>561</sup> It was time, a professional wrote, to live in a democratic society through which the exercise of the leadership was not allocated according to a "divine right" assumed to be enjoyed only by few families.<sup>562</sup> As part of the middle-class liberation movement, Teodoro Flórez, a professional accountant working for the Contraloría General de la República, narrated a history of this "natural divine right" in order to reclaim a democratic entitlement for the middle class to rule the nation. For him, he wrote in 1960 editorial, this "divine right," and the undemocratic form of rule it produced, began around the 1920s, when the U.S. Department of State published the so-called "blue book" which served to intensify "colonial

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<sup>561</sup> Letter from "servidor de la clase media colombiana" to Alberto Lleras Camargo, April 5, 1961, folder: asociaciones profesionales y de servicios, 1-4, Box, despacho señor presidente, PA.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid. See also Diego Montoya, "Las esperanzas de la mesocracia" in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 6-7, October 1964, MCLMAR.

professionalism.”<sup>563</sup> This book, Flórez wrote, contained detailed biographies of a few family names who were indicated by the “U.S. hand” as the “top,” but not democratic representatives of the nation. These few and selected family names had since then, argued Flórez, responded to the Colossus of the north by following oligarchical bipartisan politics in the service of the United States and at the expense of the interests of the nation. This leadership was thus selected according to a “colonialist logic” and, precisely because of that, the national leaders could be picked out in “the phone book of the few.”<sup>564</sup>

Other professionals went further by arguing how this “divine right” had been the result of a “democracy of blood and lineage.”<sup>565</sup> In this democracy, these few families naturally passed on, generation after generation, a “thirst for power” so their “lineage could be maintained.” Since the XIX century and the “foolish nation [*patria boba*],” this democracy of blood and lineage endured under the protection of these few families and their undeserved positions as the leaders of the nation. Furthermore, this democracy, despite having roots in the previous century, had only been consolidated during the National Front, which enabled these few families to alternate the roles and tasks of ruling among themselves in a way that “disoriented the people of the nation” and only served to benefit a handful of oligarchs. More importantly, it was precisely this very democracy of blood and lineage, these professionals insisted,

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<sup>563</sup> Teodoro Flórez, “Cumplir una misión,” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 3-4, December 1963, MCLMR.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

<sup>565</sup> Guillermo Gonzalez, “Manifestaciones antidemocráticas,” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 7-8, December 1964, MCLMR; See also, Teodoro Flórez, “cumplir una misión,” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 3-4, December 1963, MCLMR.

that should prevent, or the very least disqualify, these oligarchs from doing the work of government in a “real democracy.”<sup>566</sup> “The Lópezes, the Ospinas, the Lleras,” always seeking to benefit themselves, had become “leaders of the nation” only because of a natural divine right that undemocratically predestined them to do so, based only on their blood, tradition and good family names. This democracy of blood had forced the middle class to play the role of “transfer relay” between the “rich who want to become richer and the poor become poorer.”<sup>567</sup>

In contrast, these professionals demanded a middle-class democracy—that is to say, a society through which these professionals could enjoy the democratic right to occupy, not the center of society, but rather, “the head of the nation.” With neither aristocratic names to respect nor lineage to maintain, much less with any *natural predestination* for leadership, these professionals were fit to own, and exercise, the right to govern because they would *earn* this right by putting their “effort, intelligence, capacity, preparation, achievements, efficiency” at the service of those who were still in need of becoming democratic.<sup>568</sup> In contrast to a democracy of blood in which the right of democratic leadership was *given* by virtue of birth, oligarchic name, impeccable blood, and sovereign lineage, these professionals demanded a middle-class society through which this right to govern could only be owned by those “who [were] best prepared in society.”<sup>569</sup> That is to say, the democratic entitlement to rule should be granted to those who were able to explicate

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> Diego Montoya, “Las esperanzas de la mesocracia” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 6-7, October 1964, MCLMAR.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

the role that others should perform in the workings of the nation. A right to govern to be exercised only by those who were able to distribute the national tasks by hierarchically allocating “every member of the society” their respective share. Indeed, a right to govern would be embodied by those who were democratically knowledgeable and thus able to hierarchically assign the different roles, interests, and needs to those few and those many who would then perform according to their own specific social conditions. In short, middle-class democratic men should enjoy and possess a democratic right to govern because they were well prepared to reveal the infinite unpreparedness of others to govern:

We all know the middle class is in a position to know the society as a whole...Only the current middle class...the professional middle class, made up of the most valuable members of the society... with endless intellectual virtues at their disposal due to their preparation, experience, capacity, democratic willingness, and a constructive nonconformity, is in real position to lead leading the Colombian nation to the highest goals of democracy and social justice.<sup>570</sup>

In this democracy of the several—or middle-class society—these professionals could be truly democratic precisely because, with the national intelligence concentrated in their heads, they knew how to take into consideration “those felt needs, real interests and vocations of the laboring classes,” and with this knowledge they could assign the appropriate roles that peasants and workers were capable of performing for the nation. Indeed, in this middle-class democracy, these professional men would let everyone tend to do their own business and develop their virtues, obligations, privileges according to their specific conditions: each cobbler would democratically stick to his last. This democracy, then, rested on a hierarchical

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<sup>570</sup> Ibid.



division that reserved for middle-class professional men a right to enjoy the task of government while assigning to peasants and working classes only the democratic role of being governed. As several of these professional put in 1966,

We do not want more good family names that act on our behalf ...the democracy of blood must come to an end in favor of a real democracy...and this middle-class can grow a more just society without the separation of privileges...only democratic rights...Our middle class is not made up of *señoritos* that were born doctors and found the table of power well set for them.... Our middle class is made up of clean men who are fighters, accomplished, prudent and wise men that have disciplined their mind and their muscles in the effort and have enabled themselves to take part in the great democratic moments of our nation...we care for our society...for what they [every member of the society] do, for what they want to be...we have been preparing ourselves to become familiar with the members that make up our nation...what they want, what their interest are...our job is according to what we do...and what we do is to promote democracy for the nation.<sup>571</sup>

As this 1964 commentary published in the newsletter of the middle-class liberation movement suggests that the oligarchs were not well prepared to participate in government because they were too much like “*señoritos*”—young masters. One of the major political arguments these professionals used to authorize themselves as owners of the democratic right of government, and the middle-class society they sought to structure, was to cast the role oligarchs as childish and feminine. Thus, these oligarchs were disqualified from enjoying the right to govern in a democratic society because they were performing tasks considered either too feminine or too infantile. In a 1964 issue of the bulletin published by the middle-class liberation movement, these professionals reproduced two political cartoons previously published in *La República*, a major newspaper in Bogotá in the late 1950s and early

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<sup>571</sup> Guillermo Gonzalez, “Manifestaciones antidemocráticas,” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 7-8, December 1964, MCLMR.

1960s.<sup>572</sup> In those political cartoons, oligarchs were depicted not as infantile, but as too decrepit to be fit to exercise the role of governor in democracy. The major critique proposed in these visual productions was precisely that these oligarchs were old and incapable; even as legislators in the house of representative, they could barely read and write, and much less had any “knowledge of law and economics.” The two presumably middle-class professional men, one of them holding a book in his hand, were, in contrast, willing to school those unprepared, if unmanly, oligarchs in the basics skills needed for democratic rule. Furthermore, as a 1964 editorial published in the newsletters stated, these oligarchs were too “old, backward” and, above all, “outdated” to live in “modern democracies.”<sup>573</sup> By depicting the oligarchs as too old, too feminine, too infantile, too backward, these professionals were demanding that a right to rule should be reserved for those who were both well-prepared, and, perhaps more importantly, were able to perform as middle-class professional men. In so doing, these men could be authorized to be the “head of the nation.” In a true democracy (that is to say in a middle class society) a right to govern was stemmed neither from lineage/blood nor from wealth but, above all, from intelligence, knowledge, effort, experience, education and preparation.<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>572</sup> “Los más capaces,” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 7-8, December 1964, MCLMR. See also, *La República*, 5, June 12, 1959.

<sup>573</sup> Guillermo Gonzalez, “Manifestaciones antidemocráticas,” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 7-8, December 1964, MCLMR.

<sup>574</sup> Furthermore, in the very same issue and accompanying these political cartoons, an anonymous professionals wrote a brief comparison between an “oligarchical *dirigente*” and “democratic director.” Drawing on those ideas of democratic leadership these professionals were training in, these professional presented the “oligarchical señorito” as undemocratic, definitely feminine, *dirigente* came to hold “his position of commanding” only by “his family name.” In contrast, the democratic director, a professional who had received “manly education,” director came to achieve “his position of leadership as a result of “life of effort, preparation and imminent intelligence.” Consequently, the democratic director, a humble man seeking the betterment of others, was able to conduct his



“Los más capaces,” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 7-8, December 1964, MCLMR. See also, Samper *La República*, 5, June 12, 1959.

By challenging the hierarchies instituted by the oligarchs and the elite arrangements made during the early consolidation of the National Front, these male professionals simultaneously demanded that the right to govern others in society be granted as a property (an embodied trait) and the property (a thing to be possessed) of their class and gender. In so doing, they sought to structure a middle-class democracy—a true democracy, a democracy of the several—through which they could enjoy this (male) right by hierarchically placing themselves above the peasants, the working class and the elites—and governing them. Thus, a middle-class

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leadership by negotiating his views and interest as it did not happen with the *señorito* precisely because he had his “thirst of power in his blood...it was part of his last name.” “Los más capaces,” in *Noticias al servicio de los profesionales del estado*, 7-8, December 1964, MCLMR.

society was the quintessential requirement for a “true democracy” precisely because the oligarchs were unfit and too feminine to govern while the peasants and workers, although harboring democratic potential, were still unprepared, for proper work of democracy. These professional men would therefore exercise their democratic right, understood as a male privilege, to the benefit to both those many and those few.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued that middle-class professional men did indeed play a pivotal role in the structuration of the meanings and practice of democracy in Bogotá during the late 1950s and early 1960s. As much as the middle-class professionals were constituted by an U.S. imperial project that worked together with and through the National Front to create a middle class as an appropriate means of doing politics, I have questioned how these professional men challenged this hierarchical rule, the very class-based hierarchical rule they were a product of. In the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s—contrary to a widely held assumption about the lack of political and associative life of the Latin American middle class—these professional men engaged in meaningful collective action to form a political organization that would, they argued, bring about a revolution to transform an “undemocratic, archaic and traditional society of classes” into a “democratic and modern middle-class society.” This new project was neither merely reactionary nor entirely revolutionary, as some historians would quickly categorize or dismiss it. Instead, it was, above all, democratic. These professional men sought to constitute a democracy by establishing a middle-class society. In so doing, they both questioned

and produced hierarchical class rule in campaigning for a democratic movement that both disturbed and built gender distinctions.

This historical conclusion helps us to question a widely shared assumption about democracy. Much of historical and political science scholarship has worked from a schema whereby class and gender hierarchies and the workings of democracy are posited as diametrically opposed to each other. Those class hierarchies and gender distinctions are then explained as a lack of democracy, the failure of democracy or, at best, a deformation of democracy. Therefore, *better, more or real* democracy is then treated as the commonsense cure for gendered and classed hierarchical rule itself. In the process, each side stands opposed to the other in a closed economy whereby more of one supposedly leads to less of the other. Rather than reifying this assumed opposition, I have endeavored to interrogate how this political campaign to structure a middle-class democracy was historically constituted *through*—rather than against or in favor of—the formation of gendered and classed rule. This invites us to rethink the meanings, workings, political rationalities and technologies of rule continually at work in the histories of democracy, rather than assuming their transhistorical good or bad qualities. Furthermore, it is an invitation to go beyond the reinforcement of a mystifying notion about middle-class dominance, hierarchical rule and gender distinction as exceptions that violate, or invalidate, a putatively real and purified democratic ideal. Rather, I contend, the democratic political campaign that professionals put forward in the late 1950s and early 1960s was a project that simultaneously and paradoxically challenged a class

rule by structuring a (alternative) hierarchical gendered class rule. In this paradoxical process, the political formation of the middle class was perpetually in the making.

## Conclusion

This dissertation forms part of an inquiry that will certainly not end with its closing sentence. In this conclusion, I will retrace the major arguments I put forward throughout the dissertation, while describing briefly how I envision expanding those arguments into future inquiries on the historical formation of the middle class in Bogotá during the 1950s and 1960s.

By looking at the crucial juncture of the late 1950s and 1960s in Colombia, when the consolidation of the National Front—a bipartisan coalition—sought to usher in a new era of political reconciliation, democracy and peace, I explored how middle-class professionals became embedded in a new form of U.S. imperial rule. In the Colombian context, the National Front administration appropriated several transnational discourses that put the middle class at the center of modern democracy by systematically promoting hiring processes and training practices that constituted middle-class professionals as a democratic prerequisite for overcoming *La Violencia* and, more importantly, for establishing peace. This imperial constitution of a transnational/professional middle class must, I argue, be understood not as a distorted variant of the U.S. middle class or as an incompetent implementation of otherwise well-intentioned and benevolent U.S. policy. Rather, I contend, the transnational formation of a professional middle class was an intrinsic part of the U.S. democratic imperial project of rule after World War II. These middle-class professionals would seek to turn national societies into democracies by creating, as well as governing, appropriate gender hierarchies and class stratifications, with the

main contested divide being between those who were to be selected, trained and guided to be governors (i.e., the middle class) and those who needed to be governed (including both elites and laboring classes).

Although some historians would argue that these new political rationalities were quickly eliminated from the U.S.'s repertoire of practices of rule in favor of more coercive and authoritarian strategies, I would contend that this new practice of rule was neither marginal nor isolated, nor sporadic. During the 1950s and 1960s, this new political rationality—what I gathered here under the term *imperial humanist governance*—profoundly contributed to the transnational totemization of the middle class as the vital foundation of modern democracies in the Americas. To claim that this new rationality was becoming dominant is not to argue that its logics and practices were universally accepted. Although I mainly elaborated on how policymakers, politicians and some “experts” discussed the role of the professional middle class in the consolidation of democracy, it is also necessary to see how those dialogues were part of a larger set of transnational or imperial concerns among historians, sociologists, political scientists, high-ranking officials and intellectuals, both in Colombia and in the United States. In future research it will be important to consider the vast historiographical production on the middle class as political narratives, along with travel accounts, statistical handbooks, novels, sociological and political studies, magazines and films, to decipher more fully how these different actors asserted and contested the claim that the middle-class professional could become an indispensable anchor of political stability, social harmony, democracy and peace in the Americas. In so doing, we could also explore how those discussions



were unevenly translated into imperial policies that often led to unanticipated results. Perhaps only then can we see how a professional middle class was embedded in the constitution of new practices of U.S. imperial and transnational rule.

The second and third chapters of this dissertation analyzed how the professional middle class collectively experienced and constantly put into question an astonishing variety of political discourses, practices and actions that were reworked in order to forge a new democratic project. Having been legitimized and hierarchized as anchors of political stability in the period under discussion, these middle-class professionals could radicalize these new democratic projects by challenging U.S. imperial authority. Although I partially elaborated on this historical process, it is also necessary to trace how these professionals—mainly those associated with the middle-class liberation movement—joined formal political parties in order to materialize and question their own projects as middle-class professionals. Indeed, the different political demands these middle-class professionals campaigned for during the late 1950s and early 1960s became the very ground for questioning their role as best democratic governors. I would argue that this process led to numerous middle-class professionals joining explicitly political parties in opposition against the National Front: the Alianza Nacional Popular (ANAPO) under the leadership of Rojas Pinilla and the Movimiento Revolucionario Liberal under the leadership of Alfonso López Michelsen. During the late 1970s, furthermore, several of these middle-class professionals radicalized their democratic demands and formed a splinter group within the ANAPO that, working with dissidents from other political groups, began seriously contemplating the possibility

of participating in the recently created armed group, the April 19<sup>th</sup> Movement, commonly known as M-19. This political process posed challenges to these professionals themselves as best governors and to their hierarchical middle-class democratic projects.

Rather than asking whether or not the middle class was politically active *qua* middle class, it is necessary to historicize how this radicalization became crucial to the formation of new political meanings of what it meant to be democratic middle-class professionals in Colombia during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In so doing, we could also analyze—rather than assume—the U.S. response to these democratic-political radicalizations, which included intensifying new forms of state terror intended to destroy the very same professional middle class that U.S. agencies had worked so hard to constitute as a key element of imperial rule. During the late 1960s and 1970s, the United States reinvigorated Colombian military practices and centralized intelligence agencies in an effort to eliminate precisely those democratic political projects that these professionals were trying to put forward. Simultaneously, the U.S. reshaped new political rationalities and forms of rule, by intensifying programs such as the Peace Corps, on the assumption that, given the putative failure to create a politically “proper” professional middle class in Colombia, middle-class U.S. citizens should travel overseas in order to get the job done: that is, to create democracy, peace and political stability.

In order to fully understand the political formation of the middle class *as a class* during the late 1950s and 1960s, it is also important to see the variety of class tensions among different groups within the middle class. On the one hand, in future

historical work I will seek to historicize how the transnational expansion of the service sectors after World War II not only allowed the emergence of new workplaces but also the historical formation of modern ideas of class and gender that enabled those who were entering the world of the office to think of themselves as middle-class women and middle-class men. On the other hand, we will need to see how these middle-class women and men reworked these transnational discourses in the expansion of the service sector to put forward gendered middle-class projects of their own. Interestingly, those projects were in constant tension with those created by middle-class professionals. In Bogotá, for example, during the very same years when the middle-class liberation movement and MOCLAM were active, white-collar workers and bank employees created their own organizations to reclaim a political role in the nation as *middle-class workers*. Although they shared some oppositional discourses and practices of dissent toward the consolidation of the National Front, bank employees and white-collar workers forged new political identifications as middle class that usually were at odds with those promoted by professionals. Furthermore, it is imperative to historicize the specific role women played in the political formation of middle-class workers and of professionals. Although I have elaborated how social workers and nurses, among other professions, played a very important role in the consolidation of what I refer to as professional democracy, there is still much more to say about how women (as professionals and as middle-class office workers) played a critical role in the political formation of the middle class as a class. Female office workers and professional women founded several

political organizations through which they sought to participate in the redemption and revolution of the middle class during the late 1950s and 1960s.

In conjunction with this political process, I would argue, sexuality as discourse and practice was vital for the constitution of these competing gendered middle-class projects. Indeed, sexuality was the “microphysics of power” through which members of middle class, male and female, could constantly put in practice their contested and competing democratic projects. Who could be intimate with whom, in what way, who middle-class children could play with, how to buy, how to dress, what to eat, what language was used with maids, friends and family members at home, at the office and in the field, and all such matters located “under the skin,” were crucial for the constitution of different (democratic) political projects.

This multilayered and complex historical analysis—one that I have not been able to fully develop in this dissertation—will offer the possibility of explaining why, in recent years, the middle class (as an idea, a practice of democratic rule and a collective political identification) has been deeply implicated in the legitimization of neoliberalism and globalization. A historicized analysis of the middle class will help us to demonstrate that the present conjuncture, far from being the only natural societal order, is the product of a certain configuration of power relationships in which the idea of “the global middle class” has come to be understood as a foundational category for the workings and practices of democracy. Finally, if historians and social scientists alike continue to treat the middle class as a natural consequence of democratic societies, as a self-evident reality, or as a transparent manifestation of a post-class society, our opportunities to understand, question and

challenge the globalized neoliberal order will be extremely limited. More importantly, if we want to know where, how and in what circumstances the inequalities, hierarchies and power relations of global capitalism emerge, we must critique the historical formation of the middle class.

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Archive of the Inter-American Center for Housing and Planning, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.

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Rockefeller Center Archives, Sleepy Hollow, NY.

United Nations Archive, New York, NY.

United States National Archives, College Park MD.

Archive of the Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca, Bogotá, Colombia.

#### **Archive of Political Organizations**

Archive of the Middle Class Liberation Movement (MCLMAR)

Archive of Movimiento Aliado de la Clase Media Colombiana (MOCLAMAR)

Archive of Federación Colombiana de Profesionales Universitarios (FEDEPROCOLAR)

#### **Personal Archives**

Archive of Alberto Lleras Camargo, Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango, Bogotá, Colombia.

Archive of Orlando Falso Borda, Archive of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.

#### **Oral Interviews, Archives and Private Paper Collections**

For this dissertation all interviews were conducted by the author in November, 2004 and February/March 2005. I have also consulted private paper collections and archives of

Alicia Perdomo,

Alberto Valencia

Clodomiro Rodruiguez

Fernando Agudelo

Fernando Cortés

Fernando López

German Giraldo

Juan Emilio Echeverry

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